AN EXPLORATION OF EMBEDDING INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING: A BILINGUAL BEGINNING TEACHER'S XINGZHI/ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

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Statement of Authentication

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Education (Honours) degree at Western Sydney University, School of Education. The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not previously submitted this material, either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signature…….. 

(Xiaoyan Wang)

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Abbreviations

AR	Action Research
BS	Background Speakers
CER	Centre for Educational Research
DE	Department of Education
EESR Framework	Establish, Ensure, Sustain Reflect Framework
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
HSK	Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (Chinese Level Test)
ILTL	Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning
KLAs	Key Learning Areas
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NSW	New South Wales
PPT	PowerPoint
ROSETE	Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education
SERAP	State Education Research Application Process
SOE	School of Education

Abstract

As a participant in the ROSETE program (a partnership between the Ningbo Education Bureau, the University of Western Sydney and the NSW Department of Education and Communities), the teacher-researcher undertook study for a Master of Education degree while at the same time undertaking a Chinese language teaching assignment in a western Sydney public school.

The teaching assignment was the context for the research which sought to explore the question: How can a teacher-researcher, implementing *teacher Xingzhi/action research*, design Chinese lessons through embedding intercultural knowledge to support students' understanding and learning of Chinese language and culture? Three contributory research questions were proposed which were designed to further refine the research. These questions related to embedding intercultural perspectives when: 1) selecting appropriate content for Chinese language teaching and learning, 2) implementing scaffolding strategies to support students' learning, and 3) designing activities for interactive Chinese language learning experiences.

The methodology chosen to explore these questions was teacher Xingzhi/Action Research which links 'hands on'/action with the 'mind'/observation and reflection. The Xingzhi/Action Research cycles were implemented throughout the Chinese language teaching and learning experiences and followed four steps: 1) Planning the lessons, 2) Taking action—delivering the lessons, 3) Data collecting—observing students' performance, and 4) Reflection—analyzing the recorded self-reflections and observations. The improvement of subsequent lessons was the aim and the teacher-researcher used the findings from these improved Chinese language teaching and learning lessons to devise a framework for lesson content selection, implementation of scaffolding strategies and the design of interactive intercultural activities to make Chinese learnable for young beginning learners.

The evidentiary Chapters 4, 5, and 6 have provided an in-depth exploration and analysis of the three contributory research questions. Chapter 7 has presented the overall findings in the form of a framework (or set of guidelines) that could be considered by Chinese language teachers in western educational contexts. The limitations of this research study and recommendations for further study and research in this area have been highlighted.

CHAPTER 1
THE RESEARCH

1.0 Introduction

As the introduction to this thesis, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the background for this research project (the Australian context, the introduction of the ROSETE program, the teacher-researcher's knowledge background and research interests, and the expectation of the novice Chinese language teacher in Australia), followed by a statement of the research focus and questions under investigation. The discussion then turns to an outline of the significance and the aims of this research. The chapter concludes with an outline and structure of the thesis overall.

1.1 Background to this research project

Since the publication of *Australia in the Asian Century* (Australian Government, 2012), Australia's acknowledgement of the Asian region as a leader in world economic growth and the importance of maintaining strategic relationships with Asia, including China, has not only maintained momentum but has increased. The role of Asian languages as a means to advantage ongoing relationships with Australia's regional partners in Asia has been confirmed.

> As a nation we also need to broaden and deepen our understanding of Asian cultures and languages, to become more Asia literate. These capabilities are needed to build stronger connections and partnerships across the region

(Australian Government, 2012, p.2)

The implication of this for education and schooling has also been showcased:

> The building blocks to develop knowledge of the history, cultures, societies and languages of nations in Asia are laid at school. (Australian Government, 2012, p.167)

Learning Asian languages, including Chinese—the language of the largest Asian nation—has therefore become a serious issue for schools across Australia. However, the task of making Chinese learnable for monolingual English-speaking school students is not without challenges.

This research project has taken on an assignment to make Chinese learnable in one Australian context. The assignment was for an international student (the teacher-researcher) from China, with knowledge of the history, culture and language of China, to take these forward into a local western Sydney school to attempt to make Chinese more learnable for a group of primary school students at Gardens Public School.

Therefore, there were two main foci for this project. The first was to explore how to make Chinese learnable[1] in an Australian public school context; the second was the self-improvement of this teacher-researcher through the study and teaching experience. The teacher-researcher was a participant in the ROSETE program which is an ongoing partnership between NSW Department of Education and Communities, the University of Western Sydney and Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau. This Australia-China Partnership is contributing to efforts to build a bridge of understanding for the west and east in a global arena.

[1] The term 'learnable', here means to encourage/ensure success for students to learn the Chinese language and culture so they will continue their study beyond the years of schooling.

1.1.1 Australian context

Australia is a multicultural society as across the nation, its people "…identify with over 300 ancestries, speak as many different languages and observe a wide variety of cultural and religious traditions. Cultural diversity is at the centre of Australia's identity" (Australian Government, 2012, p.98). There continues to be ongoing relationships and partnerships with the people of Asia both in Australia and in Asia as it has been stated that: "Australia's interactions with nations in Asia have shaped our strategic focus and the structure of our economy and society." (Australian Government, 2012, p.78)

Maintaining these relationships and partnerships with Asia (and China) is a crucial aspect for Australia. Learning Chinese is one way of doing so.

Federally, the Australian curriculum has mandated that there needs to be a development of knowledge and understanding of Asian, including the making of connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia and the rest of the world. These curriculum developments have been ongoing since 2012, and as evidenced in the quote below, the importance a curriculum for the teaching of Mandarin Chinese in Australia has been a priority language in school education:

> In recognising the need to build a sound knowledge of Asia in schools, the 'Asia and Australia's engagement in Asia' cross-curriculum priority will be embedded in the Australian Curriculum. The languages component of the Australian Curriculum will enable all students to learn a language other than English—a curriculum for Chinese (Mandarin) is one of the first in development. (Australian Government, 2012, p.168).

The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) has taken positive steps from the lead given in the *White Paper* and has seen the benefits of increasing the number of students enrolled in Asian studies. However at the local school level, some have adopted Chinese as the second language to be taught; for others, Chinese is optional or an elective and taught in a limited time slot each week.

1.1.2 The introduction of the ROSETE program

The ROSETE program stands for the Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education. It is a joint program initiated by the University of Western Sydney, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities and the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (China) (Singh, 2013).

The Sydney–Ningbo Partnership has three foci. First, the primary goal is to "stimulate the teaching and learning of Chinese among monolingual English speaking students in Australian schools"; secondly, the students who participate in ROSETE are studying for a Master Degree at UWS, in parallel with their teaching assignments in schools, therefore the second goal is "the Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates' education"; the third goal is to foster "intra- and inter-organizational learning" (Singh, 2013, pp. 558-559).

In the book that introduces the ROSETE program Singh, Han & Ballantyne (2014) point out that the key elements of this program consist of:

- making Chinese learnable in English speaking countries,
- teaching Chinese in English primary or secondary schools, using the Xingzhi research methods to practice the teaching as a teacher researcher, considering the local and also global contexts for teaching and learning Chinese, and
- engaging the Chinese volunteers' work with their learning for higher education to be a teacher researcher. (p.ix)

This program has a school-focus and seeks to contribute to the improvement of the Chinese language teaching and learning in Australia. Learner-centred is one of its pedagogy, since the students are mostly beginning learners, it is vital to reducing the load and pressure in their learning.

This year (2014) is the 7th year of the ROSETE partnership program. This long-term collaboration has relied on the joint endeavours from all the members mentioned above. The teacher-researcher, as a participant in the ROSETE program, was therefore charged with the responsibility of exploring more possibilities for making Chinese learnable for beginning language learners and to improve the intercultural

understanding of these Australian students. In parallel, researching this teaching assignment was part of the HDR study at UWS for the teacher-researcher ROSETE participant.

1.1.3 The teacher-researcher's knowledge background and research interest

The teacher-researcher joined the ROSETE program from Ningbo, a coastal city in Zhejiang Province, China, that has a history of being very open to the world. Her first qualification was a Bachelor Degree from Zhejiang Normal University, with a major in Teaching Chinese as a Second Foreign Language (now retitled to: International Chinese Education).

The courses the teacher-researcher has previously studied include Ancient Chinese Language, Modern Chinese Language, Chinese Literature and Culture, English Literature, Cross-cultural Communication and the teaching methods for foreign students, (which included a comparative study of the cultures of West and East, based on inter-cultural awareness).

During these four years of undergraduate study the teacher-researcher was educated to be a Mandarin teacher for mixed-level learners from all around the world (e.g. Thailand, Korea, Portugal and the Middle East), however the course also focussed on teaching students from English speaking backgrounds. In addition, during spare time from studying, the teacher-researcher also took on volunteer work for teaching overseas students to practice their Chinese language writing and speaking, or to assist them to pass the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK), (translation: Chinese Level Test)—the language level exams. It was during this period of time that the teacher-researcher's horizon was broadened with the realization that different people from different countries have different perspectives, mindsets and worldviews. This was of interest because it raised many thought-provoking ideas to challenge one's thinking, to self-reflect and to want to learn more. The teacher-researcher also appreciated and cherished that although people were from different backgrounds they still shared many commonalities and endeavoured to understand each other.

The teacher-researcher then undertook an internship in Korea, teaching Chinese in a local university, for students studying a major titled Business Chinese. This university had a long partnership history with the teacher-researcher's own university. This Chinese teaching assignment was the first experience for the teacher-researcher to be abroad. From the growing interactions with the local Korean students, the teacher-researcher gradually cultivated a belief that the most beautiful relationship between the people from different cultural backgrounds is firstly curiosity, then sincerity, understanding and tolerance. Sometimes the language itself was not an issue, as there was often limited language knowledge and exchanges, what mattered was the willingness to make the effort to understand each other.

This belief became integrated into this university-based teaching experience of the teacher-researcher. Intercultural knowledge, which was a way that enabled each group of people to get closer and re-think their own position for a better understanding, became a keen interest. When the connection between both language speaking groups was established, the opportunities for further language learning and exchange were less formal and a rapport was quite easily established. This connection encouraged engagement.

The teacher-researcher enjoyed exploring the chances of making connections between different cultures, and discovering the commonality between people from various cultures. These experiences as a student in China and a University teacher in Korea have formed the basis for a commitment to the ROSETE program to take a different opportunity of using intercultural knowledge to engage students in a local western Sydney school to learn the Chinese language. Furthermore, it was a good opportunity for the teacher-researcher, who is a Chinese native-speaker, to undertake an adventure in an English-speaking country and to make connections to the people there through a bridge of understanding.

1.1.4 The teacher-researcher's expectations regarding the teaching of Chinese in Australia

Chinese is a very broad topic. For non-background speakers, it might be seen as a 'language', including Chinese characters, words and grammar; this indicates a focus

on the language itself. For native Chinese speakers, the concept would also include Chinese 'culture' which is an abstract concept. In other circumstances it could mean an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). When a second language learner and a native Chinese speaker observe a Chinese word or hear Chinese being spoken, they may form a different picture in their mind due to their cultural background.

The non-Chinese background speakers have different perspectives to those of native Chinese speakers, with the gap in understanding between the two, arguably due to their different life environments and experiences. The implications of this for Chinese language teaching in Australia would suggest that an inter-cultural perspective needs to be embedded into the language teaching and learning. The teacher's role then is charged to actually build a context, a target cultural environment with the connection to, and comparison with, the students' own cultural understandings. This idea of intercultural engagement provided the teacher-researcher with the expectation that this was the way forward when teaching the students in Australia.

The teacher-researcher reflected that drawing on all opportunities to reveal the cultural and personal experiences that would be brought with her from China, would provide a framework for the Chinese language teaching in the local school. For instance, the ancient and classic Chinese stories previously known from neighbourhood adults or from books and media, (especially the Chinese idiom stories with interesting plots and morals) could be used to contribute to the Chinese language teaching and learning. The teacher-researcher formed further expectations that this approach would raise the cultural awareness of the students in Australian schools when learning Chinese language.

This biographical overview has set the scene for the teacher-researcher's position on what the ROSETE program could mean personally and professionally. This recollection has provided an authentic account that during the four undergraduate years of study and the internship year, the teacher-researcher developed an ambition of teaching Chinese language and culture to people from non-Chinese backgrounds.

1.2 Research focus/problems

Considering the above mentioned personal and professional experience, and in the context of the ROSETE program, the teacher-researcher formulated the issue to be investigated.

The research question was: How can a teacher-researcher, implementing *teacher Xingzhi/action research*, design Chinese lessons through embedding intercultural knowledge to support students' understanding and learning of Chinese language and culture?

The three contributory research questions were:

1. What teaching content (Key learning words /Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?
2. What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking?
3. How can Chinese language teaching and learning activities be embedded with intercultural knowledge in order to engage students in Chinese language learning?

Some further explanation and thinking associated with these contributory questions forms the next sub-sections.

1.2.1 Contributory question 1: Teaching content

In thinking about this contributory research question, the teacher-researcher considered what appropriate Chinese linguistic materials/elements could be selected so that cultural knowledge could be explained and expanded to include a comparison with the learners' home cultural components. *Through the teacher Xingzhi/action research methodology (Chapter 3), the teacher-researcher explored the issues surrounding language components (linguistic elements) and intercultural knowledge in the preparation of the Chinese language lessons' materials and resources.*

1.2.2 Contributory question 2: Scaffolding strategies

In developing the methods to deliver the Chinese language lessons, the teacher-researcher adopted the strategy of scaffolding for students to explore the new knowledge based on their previous knowledge and conceptions. That implied that the teacher-researcher should initially provide the students with sufficient time to think and respond from their standpoint. Secondly, the teacher-researcher would provide scaffolding techniques in order for the students to observe and compare the Chinese linguistic elements and cultural components to the expressions in English. *The teacher-researcher explored scaffolding strategies to achieve this.*

1.2.3 Contributory question 3: Teaching and learning activities

The teacher-researcher had initial thoughts that the activities for young beginning learners should be interactive and have a cultural component embedded in them. Further the activities should provide opportunities for students to act on or express ideas from their own perspectives (views and thoughts). These kinds of activities enable the students to interact with each other in order to make language and culture learning occur at the same time. *The teacher researcher designed classroom culture-relevant activities such as games and craft making, using the Chinese language elements to be learned.*

The teacher-researcher had as foremost, to make the Chinese language lessons engaging and stimulating and at the same time, reinforcing students' Chinese language learning through their intercultural understanding.

1.3 Significance of this study

Language teaching should not happen in isolation from culture teaching. To convey the new knowledge successfully the teacher-researcher needed to take the learner's perspectives into consideration by incorporating an intercultural perspective. By exploring the intercultural approach to language teaching and learning, the teacher-researcher attempted to build a bridge for culture-embedded language

communication and understanding between herself and the students and the target language.

The significance of this study can be seen as four-fold: the multi-objectives of Chinese language learning, as a contribution to anti-racist education, post-monolingual education and as contributing to the literature on Chinese language learning and teaching.

1.3.1 The significance for the multi-objectives of Chinese language learning

This research has been conducted within a context where the students, classroom teachers, schools, and education system all are the receivers and/or developers of language policy, curriculum, and lessons. There are curriculum frameworks in place; syllabus documents to follow and school policy routines to be taken into account. This research has aligned with these at each level and has significance in that it has contributed to the multi-objectives in Chinese language teaching and learning in a western Sydney school. A discussion of the relevant objectives and curriculum frameworks are discussed below.

The Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning (ILTL) approach to languages education has been endorsed nationally in Australia through the release of *The National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools (2005-2008)* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2005). "Education in a global community brings with it an increasing need to focus on developing inter-cultural understanding (p.7)." Although this document has not been updated, it further supports the orientation in language learning as the integration of language, culture and learning.

Culture needs to be an important consideration in language teaching. However, as the carrier of culture, language teaching can assist with intercultural understanding. *The Australian Curriculum: Languages Chinese* (ACARA, 2013) has mentioned this benefit: "As far as possible learners are immersed in hearing Chinese. They become aware of Chinese as an alternative code to English and that other languages exist within their own classroom, their country and overseas (p.5)." Therefore, learning

the language itself could be regarded as an improvement of intercultural understanding.

According to the *Chinese K-10 Syllabus (2003)* which was set by the Board of Studies NSW, there are three objectives in Chinese language learning. They are interdependent and should not be viewed in isolation. They are "Using Language", "Making Linguistic Connections" and "Moving Between Cultures".

Using Language is the basic objective in Chinese language learning. It is concerned with acquiring the language skills through listening, reading, speaking and writing in order to result in effective interaction with the target language community. This first objective provides the basic framework for Chinese lessons for the beginning learners.

Making Linguistic Connections challenges the students to explore the nature of languages by making comparisons between Chinese and English, noticing the differences and similarities and appreciating the application of linguistic structures and vocabulary in different languages. Intercultural language teaching and learning emphasizes this ability, raising the awareness for students of making comparisons between different language contexts to better understand both the target language and the mother language of the learner. This is also a way to develop the students' critical thinking. Students (beginning learners) learn to recognize the diversity of language systems and explore how meaning is conveyed in Chinese.

Moving Between Cultures suggests that students' knowledge of another culture through language learning provides a vehicle for moving beyond their own, towards intercultural understanding. During the 'move', the objective is to have students reflect on their own culture and understand and appreciate the culture of others.

According to the *Chinese K-10 Syllabus*, an objective is stated that: "Through the study of Chinese, students develop awareness, understanding and acceptance of difference and diversity in their personal lives, and within the local and global community" (Board of Studies, 2003, p.22). Especially in K-6, skills to be learnt and

developed should be as follows: “Identifying similarities and appreciating differences in daily life in diverse communities (Board of Studies, 2003, p.22).”

In this section, the significance of this research has been identified as contributing to the overall objectives of the curriculum for Chinese language learning and teaching in New South Wales and in Australia.

1.3.2 Significance of this study for anti-racist education

According to *The National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools (2005-2008),* it demonstrated that Intercultural language learning helps learners to know and understand the world around them, realizing the commonality and difference. “Learners will view the world, not from a single perspective of their own first language and culture, but from the multiple perspectives gained through the study of second and subsequent languages and cultures (p.7)”. As a consequence, students could develop an understanding and appreciation of issues such as age, race, ethnicity, gender when they learn a new language from another community.

Teaching Chinese in an intercultural way could provide another, more tolerant, perspective of the world to the local young generation, enhance their multi-cultural acceptance and hopefully eliminate some prejudices or discriminations that might generate instability in their society.

Wing Sue (2005) suggests there are three manifestations of racism. *Individual racism*, the form of racism that can be associated with personal acts of prejudice and discrimination—some of the acts come unintentionally and outside the level of conscience awareness (reacting to what is already ingrained in their minds).Another two forms of racism reported in Wing Sue’s research (2005) are *institutional racism* and *cultural racism*, which can both be thought of as the umbrellas to individual racism.

To address racism in an adult’s mind in the short-term, sanctions and legitimation have been implemented, but for long-term, far-reaching effects, proponents have

suggested cultural education holds the key. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Democracy can't succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safe guard to democracy, therefore, is education."

Developing intercultural competence through the learning of another language can be thought of as a means to view the people in the target culture more positively. Intercultural competence means being aware that cultures are relative, that is, being aware that there is no one *normal* or *right* approach to life, but rather that all behaviour is culturally variable (Liddicoat, 2002, p.10). Therefore, learning a language from another culture can be a practical way to make the learner more open-minded and possibly confront racist attitudes.

1.3.3 Significance for post-monolingual education

The background of the teacher-researcher is a native Chinese speaker and also a bilingual learner. To teach Chinese through an intercultural perspective also required the teacher-researcher to gain more knowledge of both Chinese and English and their connections to each other. During this research, the teacher-researcher had the opportunity to use her previous educational background to engage with the new teaching and researching context in an English-speaking country; an opportunity to continue personal growth as a bilingual intercultural individual. For the students this project would provide them with a small window of bilingualism. Both of these significant points endorse the idea of post-monolingualism (an important understanding for the global era).

1.3.4 Contribution to the literature

When the teacher-researcher searched for literature related to second language learning, most research had been conducted in contexts where English was being taught as a second language. Literature associated with Chinese language education appeared to be rare. The teacher-researcher and other ROSETE teacher-researchers can play a role in the Western English-speaking countries as each group of ROSETE students undertake the teaching and researching assignments of teaching Chinese language to beginning learners in Australian schools. Each of the theses produced by

the ROSETE students over the seven years of its operations, has provided some significant contribution to the literature on Chinese language education, the internationalization of Western research education programmes through introducing non-Western knowledge to the West.

1.4 Aims and outcomes of this study

This Xingzhi/Action Research project has aimed to explore a way to weave intercultural knowledge into language teaching. Using intercultural knowledge to engage and then stimulate students to learn Chinese has the aim of making the second language learning happen more naturally. In other words, it has the aim to embed intercultural knowledge into the lesson plans to make the Chinese language more learnable for beginning students.

The outcome of this study will be to report the findings of this research in terms of a framework for:

- *content selection*, such as matching vocabulary and/or phrases to relevant topics;
- *scaffolding strategies*, such as how to question students skilfully to make the most of students' knowledge and challenge them to re-think and self-reflect; and
- *activities design* where the beginning learners' interests, cognitive ability and the need to practice the target language have a cultural component embedded in them.

1.5 The outline of this thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters.

Chapter 1 has provided the introduction to this research. It has introduced the background of this project, the prior knowledge and the teaching expectations of the

teacher-researcher. The focus of the research was defined and the research questions posed. The significance of this study and the proposed aims and outcomes conclude the chapter.

Chapter 2 has presented the results of a literature review which begins with the key concepts and theories relating to language and culture. The concept of 'intercultural' in terms of the relationship between languages and cultures and language teaching and learning has been advanced. The literature relating to language teaching (content selection, scaffolding as a teaching technique and designing activities) has also been covered in this literature review. The final two sections provide a review of literature relating to Chinese language education in Australian schools and teacher identity (in this case the teacher-researcher's bilingual background and identity as it has impacted on this project).

Chapter 3 has provided the information relating to the methodology and the methods implemented in this study. This has included an overview of methodologies in educational research and the justification for choosing the Xingzhi/action research methodology as the most suitable to explore the research questions. A comprehensive description of the research design and the research principles incorporated into this study has also been included. The specifics of the site, the participants and the methods of data collection and analysis complete Chapter 3.

Chapter 4, the first evidentiary chapter, has explored the question: What teaching content (Key learning words /Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture? By implementing Xingzhi/action research cycles beginning with lesson planning and following through until reflection the issues surrounding choosing unique Chinese culture and comparable culture have been addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of supportive resources and offers a framework/set of guidelines for beginning teachers (Chinese native speaking teachers) for content selection.

Chapter 5, the second evidentiary chapter, has addressed the question: What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking? The evidence presented

outlines three types of questioning techniques to assist the scaffolding of lessons and has concluded with data presentations and analysis of scaffolding which connects new knowledge to the students' prior knowledge (through associating physical actions with language, trans-language sentence structures and visualization with Chinese characters).

Chapter 6, the third evidentiary chapter, has provided a structured commentary of the findings from the teacher-researcher's exploration into the design of interactive, intercultural activities that would engage students in Chinese language learning. The activities chosen, designed, observed and reflected upon, are role plays, games, story-telling and arts-making. In each case the steps of the Xingzhi/Action Research cycle were followed and comments relating to the improvement of subsequent lessons have been included.

Chapter 7 has brought all the elements of the thesis together into a conclusion. The findings, presented as a framework (set of guidelines) for making Chinese learnable for beginning students in Australia, the limitations, and recommendations provide the structure for the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2
A REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter has reviewed the literature relevant to language teaching and learning and has been structured into three sections.

The first section has focused on reviewing some key literature relating to the concepts of language and culture, and their impact on an intercultural perspective for language teaching and learning for young children. This section concludes with some background literature and ideas pertaining to teaching and learning a target language (in this instance Mandarin Chinese) by addressing lesson planning (content selection, scaffolding as a teaching strategy and intercultural activities).

The second part has reviewed the current second language teaching context in Australia and identified some challenges confronting Chinese language teachers and Chinese language education.

The third section has addressed identity issues relating to second language teachers, and in this instance, the teacher-researcher herself and how the context as explained through the literature review has impacted the teaching role undertaken at Gardens Public School in western Sydney.

2.1 Key concepts and theories

Mehrnoush and Sayadian, (2015, p.215) purport that "Understanding the relationship between language and culture is crucial in the process of learning another language". This statement has provided the justification for an exploration of the literature to understand language (2.1.1) and to understand culture (2.1.2).

2.1.1. Understanding language

Considering the overviews on previous studies on language, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argued that any attempt to define language risks being reductive, as language is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The definition of language can vary from different perspectives. In the linguistic perspective, language has been idealized as a set of structures that could be acquired by teaching and learning. This is language as a set of agreed meanings assembled according to a set of rules. This approach sees language as a structural system – as grammar and vocabulary, language is simply a derivative of grammar.

Beyond the structural views of language, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) further stated that language is also understood as a communicative system. This perspective focuses more on the social purpose of the language rather than its linguistic form. Communication-focused theories explain language as communication and the learner as meaning-makers. Within such theories language is more viewed as communicative skills. If we consider the cultural element, there could be a more dynamic and broader perspective to understand what language is.

"Language can [denote] mean[ing] in two fundamental ways, both of which are intimately linked to culture: through what it says or what it refers to as an encoded sign, and through what it does as an action in context" (Kramsch, 2001, p. 15). According to this explanation, language is regarded as a system of signs and people use it to communicate with others in a community

Pennycook (2010) has proposed the idea that language is a local and social practice. "The notion of language as a system is challenged in favor of a view of language as doing" (Pennycook, 2010, p.3). According to this definition, language is communication through social and cultural activities where people are engaged with one another, where language is a product of the people, the place and the communicative engagement of "doing". Language therefore results in different kinds of practices in and across everyday life.

> To look at language as a practice is to view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity (Pennycook, 2010, p.3).

This concept of language as a practice would have us hold that language is a set of activities that are repeated over time, in different contexts and with different groups. Communication from and during a social activity links a place, a feeling, and a connection with others to produce language. In this globalized world, bilingual or multi-lingual language users are hence encoding language practices across different communities, cultures and life worlds and are able to communicate successfully in those contexts. Intercultural and cross-cultural communication aligns with human participation around the globe where language practices are negotiated and renegotiated to make meaning in different places.

2.1.2 Understanding culture

Culture is a broad and encompassing term. Geertz (1973) proposes a classic definition of culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life'' (Geertz, 1973, p. 89).

However, there are many other definitions of culture. According to Mehrnoush & Sayadian (2015) "Some people consider food, clothing, music, art, or literature as culture while others associate culture with conventions such as social interaction

patterns, values, ideas, and attitudes". As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) state, culture has also been understood or misunderstood as consisting of "national attributes", "societal norms" and "practices" (p. 17).

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) explained that to see culture as a national attribute is to perceive culture as being bound by geographic borders and constituted by the inhabitants of those borders in an undifferentiated way, such as English culture and Chinese culture. This concept of culture have been referred to, when we teach culture through literature or history to people from another country. Culture has been seen as having knowledge about a particular country. When the concept of culture is expressed in terms of "societal norms", culture takes on a relatively static and homogeneous guise. Societal norms are those ways of behaving that become accepted and taken-for-granted by the majority of citizens or by outsiders looking in. If the concept of culture aligns with societal norms, then Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) would argue that this view is based on a stereotypical misconception.

Thirdly, as Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) state, within the concept of culture there are general practices that form the culture of any society. That is, practices that include: "power relations, struggles, contradictions and change" (Sewell, 1999, p. 44). In a view that sees culture as consisting of practices, the importance of embodied actions between individuals in particular contexts located in time and space becomes the central focus of 'culture' (Bhabha, 1994). Culture is hence dynamic and evolving.

Within language education, the concept of culture has been a simplistic one which related to the practices of the people in the country where the language is spoken, for example, focusing on the food, or geographical places of interest. This is a very limited view and "there is a need in language teaching and learning to develop more nuanced understandings of the nature of culture and the ways in which cultures can be investigated in the language classroom" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 17).

On the basis of this short review, the teacher-researcher proposes that in this research a useful working concept of 'culture' would be to make a distinction between explicit culture and implicit culture (Hurn and Tomalin, 2013). Explicit culture would include those attributes that are observable in people's everyday lives and

practices such as generic language use, food, clothes, literature, public emotion and physical contact. The implicit culture would necessarily include people's beliefs, attitudes and values that may vary across any population, but where generally there could be some commonality evidenced by their explicit cultural activities (Hurn and Tomalin, 2013). These elements could be considered as the topics relevant to the cultural context in the language learning classroom and have provided a framework for the teacher-researcher to think about how embedding intercultural activities in the language classroom might be a successful approach.

2.1.3 Intercultural: the relationship between languages and cultures

Kramsch (2000, p.3, cited in Corrigan, et al., 2009, p.172) made a clear statement that language "expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality", however, since the notions or definitions of language and culture are always developing over time, so then is the relationship between them. "At its most global level culture is a frame in which meanings are conveyed and interpreted and at this level apparently is least attached to language" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 25).

Kramsch (2001, p.81) points out that the term intercultural usually means the meeting of two cultures or two languages from the different nation-states. In foreign language teaching, the intercultural perspective seeks ways to understand others through learning their national languages. "The term intercultural may also refer to the cross communication between people from different ethnic, social, gendered cultures within the boundaries of the same national language" (Kramsch, 1998, p.81). In terms of this research, intercultural exchange could also refer to the interactions between the teacher-researcher and the students in the language learning classroom (i.e. the bilingual teacher-researcher brings language and culture from China to intersect with that of the students in western Sydney, at a local public school), or as stated by Mehrnoush and Sayadian (2016, p.216) "Teachers should keep in mind that both local and target cultures are of great importance, in this way students can compare and see the differences between the target and their own cultures."

Based on the past and current studies about the language and culture, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) have also worked on the relationship between language and culture. They stated that language mediates cultures; meanwhile in perceptions of human practice, there are some practices more "cultural" and others more "linguistic." Sometimes, both language and culture could be integrally involved during the speaking or the written communication.

This means that the message in the communication is not simply a sum of the linguistic elements, but it also includes additional elements of specific and local meanings given by the culture. In this regard, language is like a carrier of the culture that sharing the connotations and associations to the standard denotation of terms.

Therefore, there is a need for language teaching to consider norms related to bilinguality and interculturality rather than focusing merely on the native speaker as the target language norm.

2.1.4 Intercultural: language teaching and learning

The importance of including culture within language learning is promoted by Mehrnoush & Sayadian (2015, p.216) who state, "It is emphasized that without the insights into the target culture, foreign language teaching is inaccurate and incomplete".

To understand language education as an intercultural endeavour, it is necessary to begin with a view of language, as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal" (Shohamy cited in Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p.14). In addition, learning a second language in a home location/country requires that the intercultural connection and relationship between the teacher (from China) and students (local Australian) can link both groups' languages and cultures to produce language learning practices based on engaging activities. In this Chinese language teaching research, the local practice refers to the classroom activities.

Justification for foreign language teaching that is intercultural has become widespread (Mehrnoush and Sayadian, 2015; Bryam and Kramsch, 2008; Gonen and

Saglam, 2012), and summarized as "language is functionless without its proper cultural context" (Bryam and Kramsch, cited in Mehrmoush and Sayadian, 2015, p.216).

To conclude this first section of the literature review, I would like to present how intercultural language teaching and learning is best served when relevant, meaningful classroom lesson content, teaching strategies (scaffolding) and activities provide the framework for teaching and learning the target language. Currently, the literature in the sections below 2.1.5, 2.1.6 and 2.1.7 are drawn from and recommended by experienced language teachers in addition to published papers by researchers. This literature has been included as the evidentiary chapters in this thesis, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have been organized around the three contributory research questions:

1. What teaching content (Key learning words /Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?
2. What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking?
3. How can Chinese language teaching and learning activities be embedded with intercultural knowledge in order to engage students in Chinese language learning?

Hence, section 2.1.5 has informed Chapter 4 and relates to teaching content; 2.1.6 has provided background literature in support of Chapter 5 (scaffolding); and 2.1.7 has focused on the planning of classroom activities (Chapter 6).

2.1.5 Selecting teaching content

Planning for teaching and learning in all classrooms, including second language teaching, needs to be systematized with the preparation of the content as a significant beginning step. In this research, the teaching and learning interactions were in the Chinese class in a western Sydney school in Australia. The focus for the teacher-researcher was to address how effectively the Australian students could learn in the new cultural context with their non-native English speaking teacher, with a background in a Chinese teaching style.

As a first and basic step for intercultural language teaching and learning, the teacher-researcher had to develop the capability and disposition to choose appropriate teaching content that would engage the students. Initially the teacher-researcher needed time to get to know the students in the class to "focus on who the students are, how th[e] lesson fits into the larger sequence of lessons and the background knowledge students have on the topic" (Theoharis and Trezek, 2008, p.385).

The teaching content needed to consider the age of the students, their background knowledge and a consideration of what resources would suit the content, so that the Chinese cultural component to the language learning could provide the most appropriate content.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, p.101) suggest five principles to guide the choice of teaching content: "active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection and responsibility."

They also pointed out that "the resources should not only provide access to the forms of the language but also to the logic of the performance of the language used by native speakers" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p.84). Taking this point, the teacher-researcher needed to acknowledge that the teaching content should not be the simple accumulation of information and facts about the culture of the language to be learned (Chinese and China). The resources needed to ensure the connection between the students' life-worlds and the real life-world from the target language (China). The resources also had a role to connect doing (activity) and thinking (intercultural engagement with the content presented) if the teacher-researcher used the resources to best advantage in the language learning lessons.

The choice of resources needed to support the content by being authentic and of intrinsic interest or an extrinsic purpose. For example, maps, menus, travel brochures, pictures and videos could all be used to engage learners through appealing to their interests and aspirations for learning the target language. The promotion of authenticity in language learning has been described by Nikitina (2011):

> In the context of foreign language pedagogy, the need for authenticity is well recognized. The dominant approach to language teaching–the communicative method–demands that the use of 'real life' language is promoted in the classroom. In order for the real world language to emerge there is a need to create authentic learning situations. (p.34)

Including authentic learning experiences and resources would enable the teaching content to include cultural materials, cultural topics and the key language words could be incorporated around and through the resources. The following scenario provides an example: To teach numbers in Chinese for young learners in primary school, the resources could be an actual telephone (smart phone or home phone), that the students use to ring a particular telephone number in China or in their local area, and also use actual envelopes to write addresses to pen pals in China or abroad. Authentic resources would be the real materials from the everyday life of both the students and the teacher-researcher and for people in the target language's country.

In contrast to the most teaching and learning contexts in China, the teacher-researcher became aware that in Australian schools, lesson planning was an activity for all teachers and was not replaced by a pre-prepared curriculum or textbook, as in Australia, these would only be used as a resource if they were adapted for a particular class (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 165).

After choosing the content and resources which addressed the objectives of the lesson, further lesson planning was important (the teaching strategies, the activities and possibly some homework). The next section has provided the teacher-researcher's investigation into the preferred teaching strategy—scaffolding.

2.1.6 Delivering classroom activities through scaffolding

The delivery of the language learning lesson to the students relies on the teacher's skill and experience in structuring the content of the lesson to suit the learners, managing the students and the pace of the lesson to achieve the stated objectives.

In the second language learning area, Donato (1994, p. 40) explains the concept of scaffolding as follows:

> In social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.

Another statement is that "Scaffolding refers to providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning" (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003, p. 345).

In this study the teacher-researcher relied on the lesson structure promoted by Conway, Richards, Harvey and Roskvist, (2011, p.34), *Establish, Ensure, Sustain, Reflect (EESR) Framework* discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3. At that point the discussion is in terms of the methodology of this research. However, at this point, the teacher-researcher needed to explore possible teaching strategies when implementing the EESR framework, and scaffolding was the strategy which showed the most potential.

Scaffolding has been defined as “the process through which one provides support to learners so as to enable them to complete a task or activity that is beyond their independent capabilities” (Pentimonti and Justice, 2010, p.243). As a successful teaching pedagogy, scaffolding has been recognized as valid. “Research on teachers’ use of scaffolding strategies in the classroom suggests that they contribute to increased learning and positive outcomes in young children” (Henderson, et al., 2002 and Rodgers, 2005 cited in Pentimonti and Justice, 2010, p.243).

According to Maggiolo (2012, pp. 42-43), there are six types of scaffolding, namely, *modelling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, representing and meta-cognitive development*. In this research project, the teacher-researcher noted some of these to help the students explore the target language and culture, such as *modelling* (where the teacher-researcher would provide the pronunciation of target vocabulary and the students would approximate)*; bridging* (through intercultural language

activities); *schema building* (where the teacher-researcher would build on the student's previous knowledge, and lesson content gradually increases in difficulty over time) and *representing* (through visualization of the Chinese written characters).

Pentimonti and Justice (2009) have studied the effects of *high support* and *low support* scaffolding during 'read aloud' sessions with preschool children. *High scaffolding* support was needed, "when a child [was] only beginning to display a skill and require[ed] a great deal of support to complete a task" (Pentimonti and Justice, 2009, p.243)

They also reported that *low support scaffolding strategies* were those requiring minimal levels of adult assistance and were used by teachers across three strategies: *generalising, reasoning and predicting* (Pentimonti and Justice, 2009, p.242).

- *Generalising* meant prompting children to extend the lesson content beyond the lesson itself to past or future personal experiences; (for the teacher-researcher: such as asking students to compare the differences between China and Australia)
- *Reasoning* prompted students to explain why something happened or will happen, or to explain why something is the way it is; (implication for the teacher-researcher: asking the students why the colour Red is important to Chinese people?)
- *Predicting* prompted learners to describe what might happen next or to hypothesize the outcome of an event/activity, for example, asking the students what the next word might be.

The teacher-researcher noted for the upcoming language teaching and learning assignment, that scaffolding lessons successfully would depend on the explanations and questioning of the students in relation to generalising, reasoning and predicting in the intercultural language learning context.

2.1.7 The activities in intercultural language learning

The activities chosen as part of a lesson plan are critical to the degree students will engage with the content of the lesson. Being from China, the teacher-researcher was trained through an educational system built on direct teaching, and text-book based instruction. Reviewing the literature on teaching and learning in a western context with primary school children and adolescents has assisted the teacher-researcher to broaden her view and increase her skill in designing interactive, intercultural activities to support student engagement.

In the book *Language Activities for Teenagers*, the author Lindstromberg (2010), draws on vast experience, and shares ideas on using ice-breakers, warmers, fillers, developing vocabulary and using literature. These are all engaging activities that focus on speaking, listening, reading and writing respectively. Although useful as samples of activities, these were discussed in terms of the language itself (that is, linguistics based).

Wright, Betteridge & Buckby (2009) published *Games for Language Learning*, where games were promoted as meaningful and enjoyable method for children to practice language. Although just one type of activity, games allow all students to participate, can be planned indoors or outdoors, competitive or co-operative and the same game format can be incorporated to focus on different content (e.g. in the language classroom, a bingo game can be used with many different vocabulary examples). Here games are regarded as one kind of activity that language teachers could utilize in their classrooms. Depending on how the game is structured, it could have a linguistic only focus or could include a cultural focus as well (e.g. on cards or pictures that display the language elements). The teacher may have to adapt the game to include a cultural element.

In *Personalizing Language Learning*, the book authors Griffiths and Keohane (2000) argue that there needs to be a communicative approach within second language classrooms, in contrast to the traditional grammar-translation method. The aim of implementing a communicative approach (i.e. language used in a context, for example, role playing) in language teaching is to cater to the life interests of the participants and focus their attention on their thoughts, their feelings, and their

actions in day-to-day situations and how language can be used to convey these. It requires an interaction between the person and the language, *for a reason.* For example, role playing comes alive when students focus their attention on replicating a real context, place or event, and where the language practice has a real purpose.

An intercultural language teaching and learning focuses on languages and cultures as sites of interactive engagement in the act of meaning-making .Language learning becomes a process of exploring the ways language and culture relate to lived realities. "It also draws on students' growing knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of their own and others' cultural perspectives and practices derived from learning area content" (ACARA, 2013, p.2)

This section of the literature review has informed the teacher-researcher's background to the teaching and learning style of students in western Sydney and in Australia in general. By reviewing this literature, the teacher-researcher will:

- Consider what teaching content to include in the language learning classroom (such as the topics and key learning words and the related resources to reveal the language and culture)
- Implement scaffoldings as a pedagogy to connect the students' prior knowledge to their new language and culture knowledge, through purposeful questioning to use generalising, reasoning and predicting.
- Design activities for the students to promote their engagement in learning in order to build the intercultural interactions between the students and the target language and culture.

The next section of this literature review has reviewed the current second language teaching context in Australia and has identified some challenges confronting Chinese language teachers and Chinese language education.

2.2 Chinese language education in Australian schools

China is a regional neighbour with Australia, and this solid connection to China is likely to continue as both develop economically or confront global issues such as climate change. In this regard the Chinese language is considered to be important for Australia and Australians. This importance has then been translated into the context where this language could be learned, that is, in schools (Orton, 2008). However, this project of including Chinese language in Australian schools is not, and has not, been without challenges for the teachers and students.

2.2.1 Lack of guidance at the curriculum level

In the Australian context, the key learning areas (KLAs) for learning all languages, including Chinese, have focused on listening, speaking, reading and writing. Though many Australian states have become involved in the program of learning Asian languages, including Chinese, "not all States mandate a specific number of characters to be learned or identify which are priorities for school students to know." The lack of guidelines for exactly what needs to be taught provides difficulties for planning and teaching Chinese language lessons.

As for the curriculum, "A great many imported Chinese language materials are published in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China and North America. These are used especially in teaching first language speakers. Those intended for the classroom second language learner of any age have been less positively accepted in Australia" (Orton, 2008, pp. 14-15). This situation indicates a lack of locally produced and therefore relevant and meaningful resources to assist Chinese language teaching and learning for Australian students, and also a lack of structure at the Commonwealth level in terms of curriculum content, especially at the primary school level. Teachers are left to their own devices and variations in what is taught, and how it is taught would vary significantly across schools.

2.2.2 Unmotivated learners

According to Orton's (2008) report (cited in Wang, Moloney and Li, 2013, p.118), 84,000 Australian students were learning Chinese in 2008. They were first language (L1), background speakers (BS) and classroom second language (L2). Orton (2008) also noted that after two or three years if it was no longer mandatory for learning Chinese in school, usually the L2 would discontinue their study. This situation is of concern as these students have already invested their time to gain some basic proficiency in Chinese and by discontinuing, these skills are lost. There is a general conception that students believe 'Chinese is too hard'.

If this conception is true and students believe 'Chinese is too hard', then this needs to be addressed through the approach to the teaching of Chinese in schools.

For instance, teaching linguistic knowledge is necessary, but this linguistics focus is not sufficient and does not take account of 'language' as action in a context for a real purpose (Pennycook, 2010). Implementing a 'linguistics only' focus ignores the hidden values and thinking of the language users. The linguistic knowledge is a window to help the learner to "see" some rules for the language but will not assist students to reach the destination of being bilingual or even reaching a high degree of competence.

Another essential goal of learning a second language is to imagine and finally participate in another possible world and in doing so it will enrich one's heart. The intercultural approach to language teaching and learning could provide this perspective and make the learner feel like the target language is not that far away and untouchable. Although the Chinese language learning classes may be difficult for the young beginners at the local western Sydney school where the teacher-researcher will undertake the teaching assignment, the teacher-research was willing to hold this belief as a faith to make Chinese learnable for the students by enriching the teaching content, strategies and activities .

2.2.3 Challenges for Chinese native-speaker teachers

Chinese language education is receiving more attention in Australia, however, an issue being raised, is that the Chinese language teachers' backgrounds such as experience, values, beliefs and their educational backgrounds are very diverse. It has been stated that there is a shortage of suitably trained and competent Chinese language teachers (especially those familiar with the Australian school context (Orton, 2008). According to Scrimgeour (2010), second language learning tends to be taught implementing a linguistics orientation, and also in a context where the student group is seen as homogenous rather than dynamic—a teacher-centred method.

There are many advantages to having Chinese native-speakers as the teachers of Chinese in Australian schools. Their knowledge of the language and culture provides an excellent background for authentic language learning. However, the difficulties outlined above, do apply to many Chinese native-speaking teachers in Australian schools. In addition Scrimgeour (2010, p.133) has noted and summarized five key challenges the Chinese native-speaker teachers have themselves identified:

1. Their unfamiliarity with Australian learning culture,
2. The low levels of learner motivation,
3. The additional responsibilities to engage the students,
4. The need to see language learning from the learners' perspective, and
5. The difficulties in teaching the first language in the second language, English.

However, the disadvantages mentioned and listed above, do not necessarily need to place negativity only, on the Chinese native-speakers involved in language teaching in Australian schools. There are opportunities from these downsides to be turning points to create and explore something new.

2.2.4 The advantages outweigh the challenges

Scrimgeour (2010, p.135) points out that in terms of the Chinese native-speaking teachers, "Their accuracy, fluency, and depth of knowledge provides great potential

immersion in natural classroom dialogue and potential real-life contexts of use that is of enormous value to learners".

Scrimgeour (2010, p.140) also states that in the early period of teaching Chinese in Australia schools, the novice Chinese native-speaking teachers were dealing less with issues of actual content for learning the language in context, and more with the linguistic approach focusing on skills and processes with grammar and translation. The importance of the intercultural, language in action approach, needed to be acknowledged by the novice teachers as Scrimgeour (2010, p.140) further elaborates the importance of "allowing what we see to contribute to a fuller understanding of how Chinese learners and teachers construct ways of being and behaving in the classroom and beyond" and "such knowledge could be best applied to achieve effective intercultural learning experiences" (Scrimgeour, 2010, p. 140).

The third and final section of this literature review has addressed identity issues relating to second language teachers, but more specifically in this instance, the teacher-researcher herself and how the context as explained through the literature review has impacted the teaching role undertaken at Gardens Public School in western Sydney.

2.3 Bilingual teacher's identity

The identity of the teacher-researcher has been discussed in this section from two viewpoints. Firstly, the teacher-researcher's background has been discussed and the impact of her previous experience on her role as the Chinese native-speaking teacher of primary school children in western Sydney. Secondly, by placing this discussion within the context of the Chinese language teaching assignment, the teacher-researcher has inwardly reflected on what her identity means for the implementation of the teaching program and research to be undertaken in 2015 and 2016.

2.3.1 The teacher-researcher's bilingual background

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.3), the teacher-researcher's educational background and achievements declared her to be bilingual in Mandarin (L1) and English (L2). In the process of learning the second language English, it was inevitable that the teacher-researcher's knowledge and cognitive background was influenced by the binary cultures. Therefore it cannot be said that the teacher-researcher is neither a 'typical' Chinese person nor is able to speak on behalf of China.

> In today's globalised cultural environment it is increasingly difficult to determine what is truly 'local,' 'indigenous' or 'individual', the compression of time and space that characterises late modernity offers ever greater possibilities for interacting with new 'Others' and creating of new 'Selves' (Grimshaw cited in Jenks, Bhatia & Lou, 2013, p.121).

The issue of culture and identity is particularly interesting in today's highly technologically-driven time, as a person can live in one physical place but be in constant contact with people from many different parts of the world (Brandt & Jenks, 2011). This interconnectedness with other people and places, through the internet, opportunities for travel and study abroad, and virtual reality experiences has important implications for our identities.

In a review of the book *Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad* , Ahn (2013, p.246) points out that the notions of interculturality and identity reconstruction during a study abroad experience will impact on the individuals involved. For the teacher-researcher, being part of the ROSETE program was a study abroad experience coupled with the teaching assignment in a western Sydney school. Ahn (2013) further suggests that both internal and external factors of individuals studying abroad will impact on their identity and be different for different individuals (p.246). The teacher-researcher's identity has been redefined by internal factors (personal recollections, feelings and emotions to events experienced in Australia), and the external factors of the living, studying and teaching in a regional town in NSW, Australia. The teacher-researcher's previous identity (on arrival from China)

and the renegotiated identity from being in a study abroad experience have both influenced the teacher-researcher's thoughts about her identity as a 'transcultural sojourner'.

2.3.2 The teacher-researcher's stance in this research—a transcultural sojourner

For the individual, (teacher-researcher), how he/she will conduct intercultural language teaching and learning is more of a stance, an orientation, rather than a body of fixed ideas and content.

Flavia Monceri (2009, p. 49) shares a similar observation in her discussion of a 'trans-culturing self':

> The self is not a product but a process, the process namely through which the individual perspective continuously changes together with the world it creates, without any possibility of solidifying as an entity since it is inserted in the flux of becoming. The expression 'trans-culturing self' aims to evoke the picture of the individual perspective in the process of its own changing within infinite different contexts and through infinite and reiterative interactions with both internal and external diversity.

Faced with the ever-changing and complex teaching context, the teacher-researcher needed to find her own position 'as a lens' to observe and analyse what was going on. In other words, the teacher-researcher became placed in a transcultural journey, where the renegotiation of her identity caused her to become a 'trans-culturing self' and to take on the stance, that the research and study components of the ROSETE program would provide space for a new identity to emerge. This new identity is one where the teacher-researcher will motivate herself to have an intercultural stance for observing the students' performance, analysing and reflecting on the data collected by the observation and reflection journal.

2.4 Conclusion

This literature review has provided the teacher-researcher with relevant background knowledge relating to the key concepts of language and culture, and how an intercultural approach to Chinese language teaching would most suit the aims of this research. The review then continued in order to provide the teacher-researcher with knowledge about how others have taught a second language successfully and how content, scaffolding and relevant activities have been used by experienced teachers and researchers.

Literature pertaining to Chinese language teaching and learning in the Australian context was reviewed next and revealed many challenges faced by Chinese native-speaking teachers. This section finished on a positive note, that within these challenges there is a space for the teacher-researcher to draw on the advantages of being a Chinese native-speaker teacher in order to make Chinese learnable for beginning learners in a western Sydney school.

Finally the literature was reviewed in connection with the teacher-researcher's identity as a participant in a study abroad experience. Again the teacher-researcher has highlighted a positive way forward as her identity has been renegotiated as the teaching and researching project will be undertaken.

Chapter 3 now follows which will provide a full exposé of the research methodology and methods employed to complete this project.

CHAPTER 3
LANGUAGE EDUCATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.0 Introduction

There are nine sections in this chapter which together explain and justify the methodology and methods implemented by the teacher-researcher in this research. These include: an overview of the methodology in educational research and language education; an introduction to the Xingzhi/Action Research methodology; the research design; the research principles informing this project (triangulation, validity and reliability, generalizability and research ethics); the research site; the participants; the methods the teacher-researcher used to collect and analyze the data and the conclusion. Together, the sharpening of these tools helped the teacher-researcher to conduct a rigorous research project to ensure the key findings reported in the thesis are considered as credible as they are significant.

3.1 Methodologies in educational research

According to Ma (2015), two distinctive methodologies have developed in social science research, the difference relating to the "social reality under investigation" (p.566). Ma (2015) poses two questions, the answers to which implicate the research paradigm that may best suit the question under study. These are: "Is the social reality external to individuals? Or is the social reality the product of an individual consciousness?" (Ma, 2015, p. 566).

This research aimed to explore a social reality that was part of the "individual consciousness" and as such is located within the nominalism paradigm. Figure 3.1 below visually represents both the paradigms and provides an overview for the methodology and methods selected for this project.

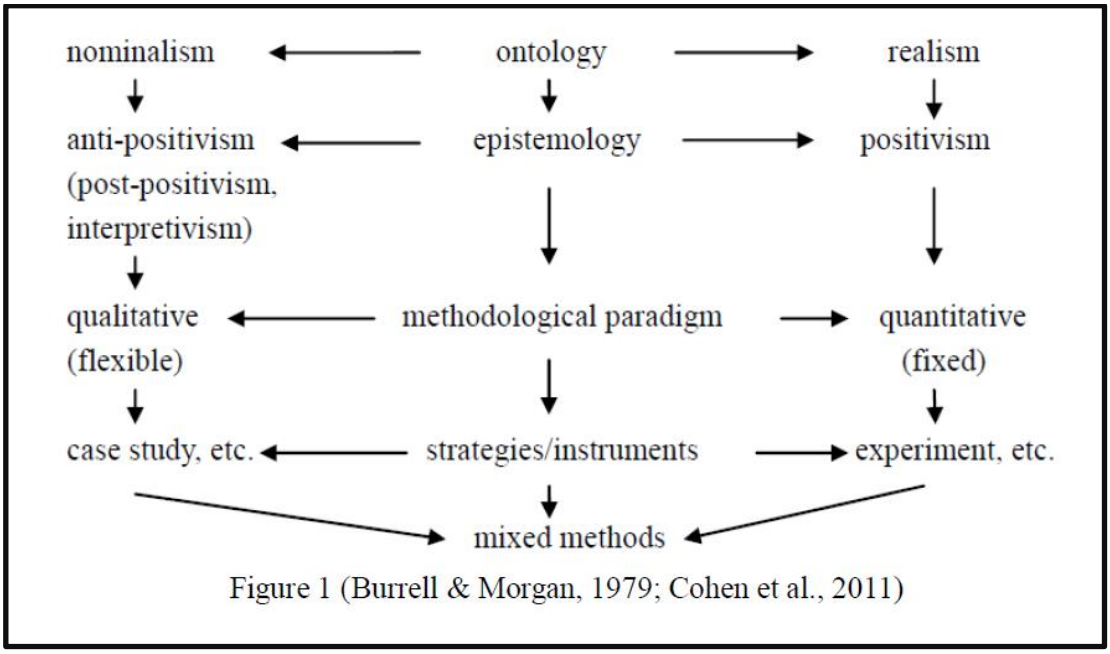

Figure 3.1: Overview of research methodologies in educational research
Source: Ma (2015, p. 566)

As can be seen in the figure above, under the umbrella of nominalism, the interpretivist approach is taken, which leads into a 'flexible' qualitative methodology that would lend itself to this research. Further justification for choosing a qualitative research methodology is offered by Iacono, Brown and Holtham (2009, p.40) who explain:

> It is possible to classify research methods as quantitative (based on numerical data) or qualitative (based on verbal data). Quantitative methods are associated with the scientific approach to research, while qualitative methods have been traditionally associated with phenomenology ... In qualitative research collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting are often carried on in parallel and the results of one activity can alter the direction of the others.

Considering the context of this research, a teaching and learning environment in a public school in western Sydney, the comment by Cooley (2013) further lays a good foundation for the teacher-researcher's choice of methodology:

> Indeed, the richness of detail provided by qualitative research gives insights into the complicated nature of teaching and learning that would be missed through other means (Cooley, 2013, p.250).

Similarly, this research aligns with the qualitative paradigm as it aimed to "study the phenomenon within its social and cultural context …" (Iacono, Brown and Holtham, 2009, p.40) and as Simpson and Tuson (2003) further suggest, within qualitative research, there are opportunities to "gain further understanding and insights into how different people perceive and interpret events, how they behave in specific contexts, and how they interact with others" (Simpson and Tuson, 2003, pp.11-12).

With reference to Figure 3.1 there are many research 'strategies' relevant to a qualitative study. The following section discusses the most suitable for this study.

3.2 Teacher Xingzhi research and action research

'Xingzhi' is the first name of a renowned 20th-century Chinese educator and reformer Tao Xingzhi, who had studied at Teachers College, Columbia University following John Dewey. The name 'Xingzhi' is actually a catch-phrase from a Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming. 'Xing' means 'Action' while 'Zhi' means 'Knowledge'. Putting these two characters together forms 'Xingzhi'—a concept that knowledge is inseparably connected with on-going actions.

Tao Xingzhi practiced his ideals for educational reform in China according to Dewey's theory of democratic education among which there is a method of "learning by doing" (Yao, 2002, p.253). Take swimming for instance; you would not know how to swim unless you jumped into the swimming pool to learn it in the water. Tao believes that "all true knowledge is derived from 'doing', or direct experience" (Yao, 2002, p.255).

> He further defined the meaning of 'doing' as a conscientious activity that involved working with one's mind while working with one's hand (Yao, 2002, p.255).

that is, an integration of *mind* and *hand*.

This teaching philosophy of Tao Xingzhi can be seen to be quite close to the practical methodology of Action Research, whereby teaching practice is the 'Action' and the connection with hand and mind would be the overall 'Research'. According to Habermas (2006), there are two levels of Action Research (AR). On the one hand, it is a methodology to systematically observe and analyze phenomena in a social context, and on the other, AR is also "a way to understand knowledge and research as a transformational event that deals with different interests in human experience and that ultimately can enable us to explore and share our common humanity" (Habermas, 2006, p.113).

3.2.1 Teacher Xingzhi/action research in the classroom

A justification for implementing the teacher Xingzhi/AR methodology in the classroom context can be found in the literature. Kemmis and McTaggart (2008, p.273) state:

> Classroom action research typically involves the use of qualitative interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection by teachers (often with help from academics) with a view to teachers making judgments about how to improve their own practices. … Primacy is given to teachers' self-understandings and judgments. The emphasis is "practical," that is, on the interpretations that teachers and students are making and acting on in the situation.

Of significance to the context of this research (a western Sydney public school), is that the Department of Education (NSW), has promoted AR for teachers in NSW public schools since 2010. The DET NSW publication *Action Research in*

Education: Guidelines provides a tool kit and justification for this methodology in classroom contexts, as it is stated:

> Teachers use action research because:
> 1. it deals with their own problems, not someone else's
> 2. it can start now—or whenever they are ready—providing immediate results
> 3. action research provides them with opportunities to better understand, and therefore improve, their educational practices
> 4. as a process, action research promotes the building of stronger relationships among staff
> 5. importantly, action research provides educators with alternative ways of viewing and approaching educational questions providing a new way of examining their own practices DET (2010, p.1).

The following section outlines the specifics of the design of this research.

3.3 Research design-teacher Xingzhi/AR cycles

The teacher Xingzhi research/AR design implemented in this project consisted of ongoing cycles throughout each teaching term. Each lesson followed the Xingzhi/AR cycle, which included four steps. These steps were:

1. Planning Lessons (Preparing the Content),
2. Taking Action (Delivering the Lessons),
3.Collect Data (Observe Student Performance and Record)
4. Reflection (Writing up Reflection Journal)

The diagram below (Figure 3.2) visually represents the research design.

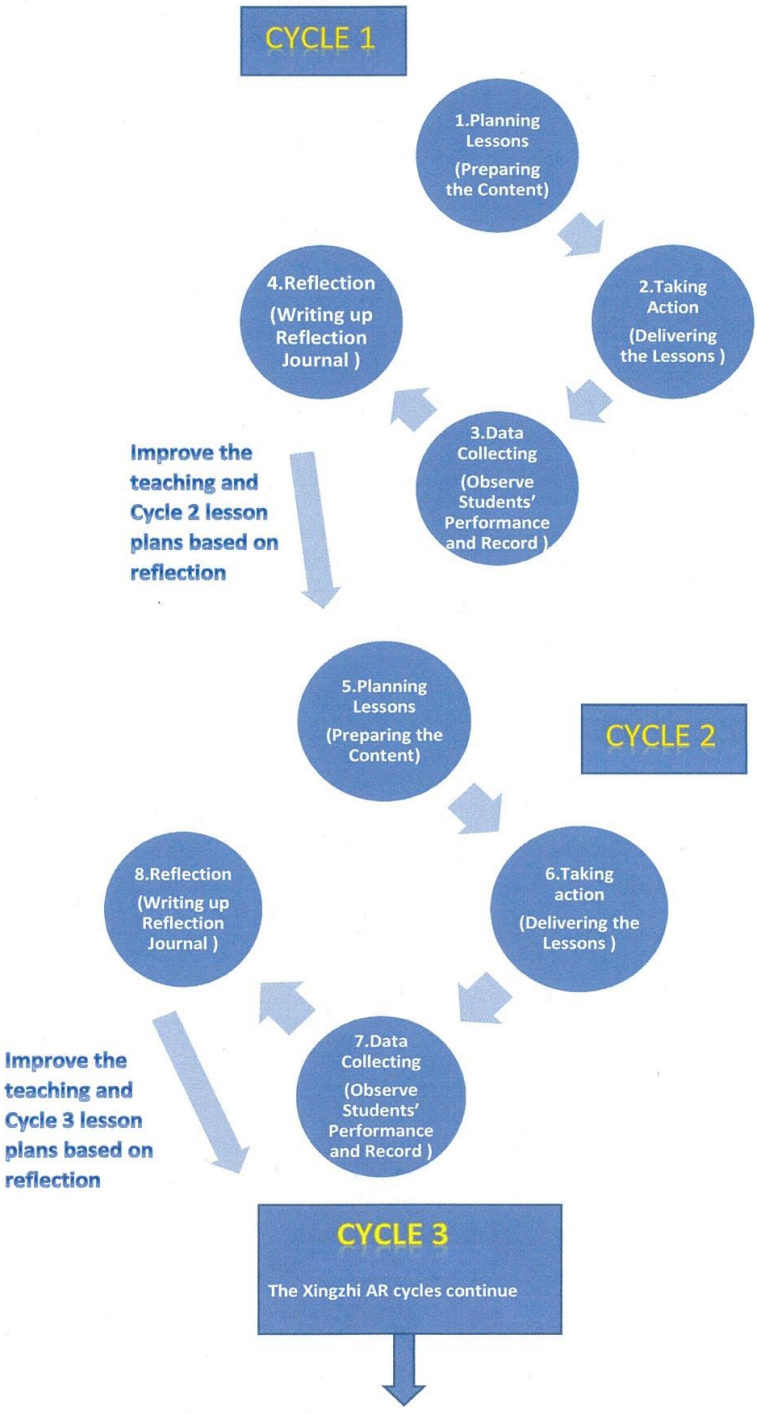

Figure 3.2: The teacher Xingzhi/Action Research cycles

The following section discusses in detail the steps within each of the cycles of the teacher Xingzhi/AR research design.

1. Planning Lessons: Selecting teaching materials from books or Internet, planning and designing the teaching activities (games, craft-making, role-play), including the activity description, the time management, the teaching instructions (e.g. what questions should be asked?), and the teacher's expectations for the students.

2. Taking Action: Implementing the teaching plans in Action. In this study, the teacher-researcher utilized the *Establish, Ensure, Sustain, Reflect (EESR) Framework* to implement the lesson plans (Conway, Richards, Harvey and Roskvist, 2011, p.34) as follows:

a) *Establish engagement*:
   (i). gain learners' attention (showcase the students' cultural realities and/or ask them questions)
   (ii) provide opportunities for learners to build on prior knowledge progressing to the new (e.g. through examples of cultural realities from another country)
   (iii) provide clear transitions/links between lesson content (e.g. revision, personalising, asking questions, stimulating inter-cultural perspectives, helping the students to make the connections or reveal the differences)

b) *Ensure learners can complete the task*:
   (i) provide sufficient language exposure to learn and practice the vocabulary taught within the culture context (e.g. through revision of language, repetition and clarification of known and new vocabulary and its structures)
   (ii) give clear, staged instructions
   (iii) check instructions
   (iv) organise resources (e.g. ensure preparation of the activity includes resources to complement the content and which will stimulate children's interest in completing the task)

c) *Sustain engagement* (e.g. through activities like games, craft-making, role-playing, discussion and some particular tasks that relate to the cultural topics and the key vocabulary)

(i) monitor learners by providing encouragement, feedback, clarification, and adequate timing

(ii) observe the learning (e.g. the teacher establishes a relationship with the students to check their on-task working or listen to their discussions to gain an insight of what the students are thinking).

d) *Reflect on learning* (Compare the initial thinking of students with the newly learned one by questioning)

(i) provide opportunities for both teacher and learner reflection on successes and weaknesses

(ii) provide closure to each activity/lesson (revision of lesson).

3. Data Collecting-Observe Students' Performance and Record: While teaching the classes, the teacher-researcher needed to observe the responses (verbal and non-verbal) from the students to monitor their understanding and participation in terms of the planned lesson.

4. Reflection-Writing up Reflection Journal: After class, the teacher-researcher reflected on the classroom reality (e.g. what was different from the expectation of the planned lesson and to analyse why, what worked well, what could be improved and how answers to these questions for reflection will then inform the next cycle of Planning Lessons, Taking Action, Observation and Reflection with the aim of improving teaching practice (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2016).

Having decided on the methodology for the research, the teacher-researcher then turned to the overarching principles which added a further element to ensure the framework for conducting this research was justified.

3.4 Research principles

Some key general principles were considered throughout the planning and conduct of this teacher Xingzhi research/AR design. These were triangulation, validity and reliability, generalizability and the ethical principles and procedures.

3.4.1 Triangulation

Triangulation, "reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin, 2012, p.82) by taking multiple perspectives.

> Put simply, the concept of triangulation means that an issue of research is considered or in a constructivist formulation is constituted from (at least) two points (Flick, 2007, p.40).

There are several vantage points from which the perspectives can be sourced. Denzin (cited in Flick, 2009, p.444) contends that there are four types of triangulation: Data, Investigator, Theory and Methodology.

Jahoda (cited in Flick, 2009, p.39) has proposed four themes where triangulation could assist to ensure rigorous research:

1. When investigating a social reality, qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other,
2. Objective facts and subjective attitudes could be collected,
3. Observations of the present can be complemented with historical material, and
4. Inconspicuous observation of spontaneous life can be combined with direct, planned interviews.

In a small scale research, like this study, using data triangulation seemed to be the most appropriate. The aim being that to collect data from different sources and/or using different angles to analyze the collected data, would give the results more grounding and less bias.

The teacher-researcher used triangulation with the data collection by proposing two data collection sources: the teacher-researcher as a participant and the classroom students. The data gathered from both groups utilized the teacher-researcher's record of teaching and learning episodes. For the teacher-researcher, the method was the ethnographic writing recording self-reflections and self-observation. The intention

being to address Jahoda's (cited in Flick, 2009) proposal to include both *objective facts and subjective attitudes* as mentioned above. For the students, observations by the teacher-researcher also recorded in the reflection journal, but which takes into account number 4 above, although no planned interviews were held.

These two sources of data were collected across the implementation of the research cycles of this teacher Xingzhi/AR project.

3.4.2 Validity and reliability

As Roberts and Priest (2006, p.41) state, reliability and validity are ways of "demonstrating and communicating the rigour of research processes and the trustworthiness of research findings". It should not mislead others. Tests of reliability are an indication of how closely the research would produce similar results in different circumstances whilst the validity of the research would address the closeness of what we believe we are measuring, to what we intended to measure (Roberts and Priest, 2006). They also pointed out that in order to achieve reliability and validity, the research question, how data are gathered, including when and from whom, how data are analyzed and what conclusions are drawn all need to be transparent and open.

Since the teacher Xingzhi/AR design in this study is an example of qualitative research, the reliability and validity cannot be addressed through testing by numbers as in quantitative research. Both reliability and validity in qualitative research hold transparency and openness of the research process to be vital but not verified through numerical testing.

In qualitative research, *reliability* is concerned with the trustworthiness of the results of a study within its own context. Replication in a different social context to achieve the same findings is not the issue for this qualitative study. However the teacher-researcher has kept reliability as a research principle by collecting the data honestly and openly.

Similarly the teacher-researcher has adopted *validity* as a research principle, but in this qualitative study, the issue of bias has been brought forward and considered. Roberts and Priest (2006) contend that researchers tend to interpret the data according to a personal perspective and this issue needs to be addressed by the researchers themselves. The teacher-researcher has acknowledged that personal bias and perspectives may have influenced the data analysis and findings. However, implementing the principle of triangulation could, to some extent, assist with the validity and reliability in this study. The two methods of data gathering from the two different groups could have reduced bias in this study.

In recording the observations of students' engagement with the Chinese language lessons and the teacher-researcher's own reflections, it has been acknowledged that:

> Bias arises from two sources: the influence of the researcher over participants' behaviours and the impact of the researcher's own beliefs. (Iacono, Brown and Holtham, 2009, p.41).

The teacher-researcher was mindful of these issues as research principles.

3.4.3 Generalizability

Generalizability refers to "whether your result will hold true for subject and settings beyond those in your study" (Morrel and Carroll, 2010, p.76) and although more applicable to quantitative studies, this principle needs to be addressed within qualitative paradigms as well.

> Most qualitative research studies, if not all, are meant to study a specific issue or phenomenon in a certain population or ethnic group, of a focused locality in a particular context, hence generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute (Leung, 2015, p. 326).

However, this study is a teacher Xingzhi/AR design, which means the generalizability is limited. Additionally this research was undertaken in a unique

context, which was the ROSETE volunteer program where the research was undertaken in a local NSW public school. The small scale of this research has determined that the results are not able to be claimed as universal. What can be offered as generalizable from this research are the teaching and learning components of the research, which have been discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

3.4.4 Ethics and approval to conduct the research

There are various aspects related to ethical issues when designing research that involves human participants and in this case, when children are participants (Meltzoff, 2008). Clear ethical guidelines are in place at the University and State Education Department levels, that need to be adhered to, in order to safeguard all involved in the research process.

At the proposal stage, this research project was approved by three committees.

3.4.4.1 Centre for Educational Research (CER), School of Education (SOE)

The first level of approval to conduct this research project was gained when the teacher-researcher defended the research design with a panel of academics from the CER and the SOE at Western Sydney University. At this level the teacher-researcher needed to demonstrate a clear understanding of how the research would be conducted in terms of the methodology and methods and how the literature in the field would support this (Chapter 2).

3.4.4.2 Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

The teacher-researcher completed an in-depth questionnaire form, the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF), which was submitted for review and approval to the University's HREC. Approval for the conduct of this study was received and appears as Appendix One-Approval ID# H11308.

Throughout each section of the NEAF the teacher-researcher needed to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to, ethical processes when conducting research

with human participants. The following ethical issues were addressed and explained to the participants through Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms (Appendices Two and Three):

Privacy: The protection of the privacy of the participants was taken into consideration in this study. All the issues related to the privacy of the participants were enacted with assurances to the participants and/or their parents and caregivers that no real names or identifying data would be revealed publicly.

Voluntary participation: For the students involved, the research was based on the lessons taught by the teacher-researcher and as these formed part of the Language Curriculum at the school, this research was not an intervention. However, parents/caregivers were fully informed about the research and they were given the opportunity for their child's data to be withdrawn from the project.

Perceived risk to participants: "The initial decision about whether or not to do a study is usually thought to be an ethical decision when the research poses a risk to participants that exceed the anticipated benefits" (Meltzoff, 2008, p.317). Fortunately in this project, the perceived risks did not exceed the anticipated benefits and this was explained to the participants and approved by the HREC.

Respect for participants: The teacher-researcher as a participant and a researcher would respect the students and the school community in delivering the Chinese lessons, and when collecting the data.

3.4.4.3 State Education Research Application Process (SERAP)

A third level of ethics approval to conduct this research was received from the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education (DE) via the State Education Research Application Process (SERAP). The teacher-researcher completed an application to conduct the research at a local public school by outlining the research processes and being transparent about what the research would involve for the participating children and their teacher. The SERAP was approved (ID# 2015543) and appears as Appendix Four.

3.5 Site

The research site was a primary school in the western Sydney region. Enrolment at the time of this research was approximately 300 with students staged from Kindergarten to Year 6. Each class was comprised of around 25 students. This school was very keen to have their students learn Chinese; the school included some Chinese story learning lessons and celebrated Chinese Festivals as they occurred throughout the year. The whole school displayed an interest in China and learning Chinese. The teacher-researcher was assigned to teach Mandarin Chinese to the students from Years 4 to 6. The lessons were scheduled for 45-50 minutes and were delivered by the teacher-researcher once a week which reflected the school's timetable for second language teaching and learning.

3.6 Participants

The first direct participant in this research was the teacher-researcher herself; the beginning Mandarin teacher was also the Xingzhi/action researcher. Next, the target students were very crucial to the study. In order to focus the research and to collect a manageable amount of data, the teacher-researcher based this study on two classes of Year 5/6 children. One class consisted of 28 students, whilst the other included 27 students. No individual data were collected from or about these students, but they were actively observed by the teacher-researcher throughout the Chinese lessons and provided the focus for the teacher-researcher's own critical reflections recorded in the reflection journal. Some work samples as outputs from the language lessons have been included in the evidentiary chapters (4-6)

3.7 Data collection

The two sources of data collection in this project were observation (during the lesson implementation) and the reflections of the teacher-researcher after the teaching and learning events which were recorded in the reflections' journal. The observations made by the teacher-researcher took place during the third step of the Xingzhi/AR

cycle (see section 3.2 above), and became part of the reflections the teacher-researcher recorded, step four of the Xingzhi/AR cycle.

3.7.1 Observation as a data-gathering technique

The skill of observation is a key ability when undertaking qualitative, teacher Xingzhi/action research. In this research, the teacher-researcher was a participant observer, that is, "participating in a situation, while, at the same time, recording what is being observed" (Iacono, Brown, and Holtham, 2009, p.39). Hence, the teacher-researcher participated with the students in the teaching and learning context, but also tried to move beyond 'looking' at the situation as is explained below.

3.7.1.1 'Observation' as opposed to 'looking'

As a beginning Chinese teacher and researcher a significant insight gained, was by acknowledging that 'observation' goes beyond 'looking' at a specific interaction, event or context.

After conducting teaching in the language classroom, the first level interpretation of 'what went on' can be similar to the recollection of a personal experience. Therefore the teacher-researcher needed to move beyond just 'looking', towards a keener 'observation' of the teaching and learning context. That is, to "try to detach yourself from your own personal automatic interpretation of what is going on, and to try to see events from different perspectives" (Simpson and Tuson, 2003, p.3).

The teacher-researcher needed to address what might be the implicit assumptions when designing the lesson plans, teaching and observing the class by having key questions in place as a reminder to *observe* rather than *look*. For example, beside each activity's description, there could be a note of *what to observe* in terms of students' learning and behaviour. This would assist the teacher-researcher to observe what is important for the teaching and learning episode, and therefore what to collect/observe in the classroom. As Simpson and Tuson (2003, p.3) stated, this is an opportunity to "examine our assumptions, to challenge them and offer alternative viewpoints".

3.7.1.2 Recording the observations

> All observation strategies can be described in terms of what is to be observed, and how it is to be recorded. Generally speaking, recording systems can be divided into three types: systematic recording (using fixed schedules), descriptive recording (using descriptive and narrative records), and technological recording (using cameras, video or audio recordings) (Simpson and Tuson, 2003, p.27).

In this research, *descriptive recording* was the strategy utilized as observations became a significant part of the data collected and recorded in the teacher-researcher's reflection journal entries. In this way "Narrative systems are used to obtain detailed descriptions of interactions or events without starting from pre-specified categories." (Simpson and Tuson, 2003, p.48). The focus of these observations was the engagement of students with the lessons and their acceptance of the Chinese learning as the research questions were explored.

Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) provide insight into the range of observations that the researcher can focus on, and being a participant observer, meant the teacher-researcher was:

> not only … a player in a particular social milieu but also fulfilling the role of researcher—taking notes; recording voices, sounds, and images; and asking questions that are designed to uncover the meaning behind the behaviors. (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013, p.75)

3.7.1.3 Limitation of participant observation

The issue of researcher bias in qualitative research needed to be addressed by the teacher-researcher when developing the research design for this study. The work of Iacono, Brown and Holtham (2009) has provided the comment to acknowledge the possible limitation of participant observation by the teacher-researcher:

> A major criticism levelled at participant observation is the potential lack of

> objectivity, as the researcher is not an independent observer, but a participant, and the phenomenon being observed is the subject of research (Iacono, Brown and Holtham, 2009, p.42)

3.7.2 Self-reflection (personal documents)

Integral to the data collection in this teacher Xingzhi/AR study was the recording of the teacher-researcher's self-reflections throughout the four steps of the research cycles. Reflection as the fourth step in the research cycle, was pivotal to this study. Richards and Lockhart's (cited in Bahar, 2011, p.126) definition seems to best capture the premise of reflection in the field of teaching:

> A reflective approach to teaching is one in which teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching (p.126).

As a data collection method, reflection or self-reflection, aligns positively with the methodology and paradigm chosen for this research as follows:

> It is reasonable to assume that reflection as a process is rooted in an interpretivist paradigm. By this I mean that it is concerned with approaches that share a set of subjectivist assumptions around the nature of social order and lived experiences. (McIntosh, 2010, p.39)

In practice, every teacher would 'look back' at their classes and from their reflections, draw implications for improvement to their classroom teaching. The significance of self-reflection has been highlighted as "Reflective practice is a paradigm that dominates teacher education around the world; therefore, it is commonly included in many professional development programmes" (Bahar, 2011, p.126).

Reflections as recorded in the teacher-researcher's reflection journal provided valuable material for revision and improvement of teaching practice, throughout the

teacher Xinghzhi/AR cycles in this research. Self-reflection is a personal document and provided the teacher-research with the opportunity to evaluate the realities of the classroom, while at the same time providing a "complementary data collection procedure in support of triangulation …" (Glenn and Bowen, 2009, p.35).

3.8 Data analysis

The purpose of data analysis is to translate the evidence into a form which allows the researcher to make clear and concise statements of description and/or association." (Anderson and Burns cited in Simpson and Tuson 2003. p.76)

Data need to be examined and interpreted "in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (Corbin and Strauss cited in Bowen, 2009, p.27).

The processes of data analysis in this research are discussed in the next two sub-sections.

3.8.1 Analysing data to answer the research question

In most instances of qualitative research collecting the data can result in large amounts of 'raw data' that captures the phenomenon under study, but not all will be specific to answering the research questions.

> Raw data are those containing information relevant to our research question. A data analysis that moves from texts to theoretical explanations assumes that not all that is said in a text is relevant to a specific research question. (Gläser and Laudel, 2015, online, section 3.1)

The first layer of data analysis was to establish the relevancy of sections of the data collected.

3.8.2 Sorting the data for relevancy

Sorting and selecting the data has been described by Gläser and Laudel (2015) as a two-fold process:

> First, the analyst needs to recognize parts of the text as containing information that is relevant for answering the research question. Second, a decision needs to be made which variable/category the information belongs to. (Gläser and Laudel, 2015, online, section 3.1)

As more and more data were read the teacher-researcher looked for patterns or categories of information that recurred and assigned labels to these.

3.8.2.1 Coding the data

Coding the data throughout the analysis assisted the teacher-researcher to manage the raw data. The coding process implemented was open coding.

> Open coding is the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data….During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.62).

The coding itself may include: "keywords, phrases, mnemonics, or numbers—that signal the occurrence of specific information" (Gläser and Laudel, 2015, online, section 4.2). In this research, keywords were used as the open coding process.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods chosen by the teacher-researcher as those most suitable to explore the research question and contributory questions:

How can a teacher-researcher, implementing *teacher Xingzhi/action research*, design Chinese lessons through embedding intercultural knowledge to support students' understanding and learning of Chinese language and culture?

The three contributory research questions are:

1. What teaching content (Key learning words /Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?
2. What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking?
3. How can Chinese language teaching and learning activities be embedded with intercultural knowledge in order to engage students in Chinese language learning?

Chapter 4 Teaching Content for Intercultural Language Learning follows with the presentation of the research and findings from the exploration of the first contributory research question.

CHAPTER 4
TEACHING CONTENT FOR INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

4.0 The introduction

This chapter has explored the first contributory research question:

> What teaching content (Key learning words/Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?

The teaching content in this chapter refers to the relevant and meaningful topics that could serve for both the language and intercultural learning and also includes resources that would support the content. The teacher-researcher has observed and reflected on the students' responses to the lessons (implementing the Xingzhi/AR cycle) to assess if the teaching content was engaging and valuable in providing possibilities for the intercultural language learning.

The sections in this chapter cover the exploration of selecting content on the basis of "Using culture as a resource" and "Using learners as a resource".

4.1 Using culture as a resource

The cultural elements relating to language learning are like a context that will "allow for the discovery of similarities and shared values as well as difference between

cultures" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p.98). There are many types of cultural experiences that could be drawn upon and implemented as the resource to support intercultural language learning. In this section, the teacher-researcher explored this possibility through some *unique Chinese culture* and the *comparable culture* (Australia and China) to explore if the selected content was appropriate for the objectives of the lessons.

4.2 Unique Chinese culture

There are some aspects of culture that are very special and practiced only by the Chinese people. Highlighting and focusing on these was the first idea that the teacher-researcher had in mind when planning the teaching content for language learning. In the following section, the advantages and disadvantages of using the *unique Chinese culture* as the basis for teaching content have been explored.

4.2.1 Unique Chinese linguistic knowledge—Characters and associated Pinyin

Language is an act embedded in a culture. It could also be regarded as a cultural product to some extent. There are some unique traits in Chinese language that could affect students' understanding when they learn this language if the teacher does not explain these clearly beforehand; these are the Chinese Characters and Pinyin. They are very different from English and could be thought of as very strange and confusing to the students. In the first few weeks, before starting on the language learning journey, the teacher-researcher believed it was important to provide the students with a clear explanation of what was meant by Pinyin and the Chinese characters. It was also a good chance for the students to reflect on their language and the understanding of others from another language and cultural background. Below is the excerpt from the teacher-researcher's reflections journal relating to this teaching and learning experience.

> Since it was close to the Chinese New Year, I asked the students "Do you know what animal year, it is this year?" as an engaging point. Most of them could answer it was the *Year of the Goat*. Then, I showed them the picture of

the goats with the translation of the word ‘goat’ in six languages (English, French, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean) at the side of the picture (Figure 4.1 below). I asked them to pick out which language was Chinese.

Figure 4.1: Picture of ‘goats’ with translation in six languages

Some students chose Japanese and some chose Korean. No one chose the alphabet scripts such as French. I was quite shocked that most of the students had no definite idea of which one was Chinese given they had been learning Chinese for a few years. Luckily some of them could recognize the Chinese characters as distinctive. (This was within my first few Chinese lessons but it was not the first time for these students to have a Chinese lesson. They already had lessons from other volunteer teachers. According to my observation, they could not identify the Chinese character and Pinyin exactly. Perhaps the reason for their successful guess was that the character, in some way, reflected the image of a goat). I confirmed their answer and told them that the Chinese character was like an image or symbol, built by various strokes or lines, and it was our written language. Students felt this kind of language was fun because it was different and more vivid than their written language.

I continued by asking the students to point to the English word for *goat*, asking them for the pronunciation. Most students answered me together proudly. I moved my fingers to the Chinese character 羊, asking students to try to make some pronunciation of the character. No one answered. I

challenged them to think about, why they were unable to read 羊 as they might normally do, to sound out a word, using letter sound/phonetic skill. Again, no one could answer. The class was quiet. It seemed that they had never thought about this question and maybe they didn't really care. I took this chance to introduce the concept of Pinyin (the spelling out of the sounds that make the Chinese characters) and explained the reason why we need Pinyin. I observed that these young students were a little bit talkative and easily lost attention if I talked too much in explanations even when they were 'common sense'. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Week 2, Term 4, 2014)

In order to support the students' deeper understanding of the Pinyin and to enable them to reflect more about the language without further long explanation, I invited the students into a 'phonetic sense' discussion in the next lesson. That is, implementing the next Xingzhi/AR cycle, after the reflection on the first lesson.

Firstly, I asked a "True or False" question that "Each language in the world has the same phonetic systems". Most of the students said "True!" I didn't tell the answer but asked them to listen to an audio recording. The sound was a dog barking. After this, I asked the students to spell the sound they heard on the board. The answers they wrote were: "Roof, ruf, woof, worruf, rururuf, and bark". I was surprised by their spelling. Even though these students speak the same language they spelt the sound differently. They felt this was interesting as well. I told them I was going to write my example on the board next to theirs. The students stared intensively. I wrote down the Pinyin "Wong Wong Wong" on the board and the students exclaimed "What?!" I then mimicked how Chinese people would imitate a dog barking. They were amused and thought I was just having fun. I then told the students, "Now, let's see something here. Think about 'Wong Wong Wong', and try to put that into your head. Now listen to the sound again, okay?" The students were very curious and exited. The class was never quieter than this. Then I played the sound again, this time, as I assumed (I have done the same at home by putting the "woof" in my head and listened again and I could hear it and it made sense). The students appeared to be quite amazed with

their eye wide, and said, “Ohhh! Now I see it!” I explained that although we heard the same sound, the way we spelt it, was quite different. I also told them that in Korea (I have been to Korea and learned Korean) people would spell a dog barking as “Mong Mong Mong” because they had another phonetic system in their head. The students were amazed and started to discuss further with peers. Some of them asked me how Chinese people would spell other things. To conclude I asked that “True or False” question again. This time all of the students realized the answer should be “False”. (From the teacher-researcher’s observation, Week 3, Term 4, 2014)

Analysis and reflection

When the teacher-researcher challenged the students to pick out the Chinese character from another five languages, their first response was to realise it would not be alphabetized. This revealed that the students were aware that the Chinese written language was different from their own. However, they did not know exactly since their experience with Chinese characters was very limited. At this point the teacher-researcher reflected that the students needed to learn the concept of the Chinese character, even initially to have it raised in the students’ minds. Moreover, it would then be easier for the teacher to build on this in further lessons.

As the lesson continued to include the content related to the Pinyin, the teacher-researcher guided the students to move from their language to the target language to reflect on the necessity of Pinyin and then to notice the difference between the Chinese written characters and the English spelling alphabet. Although it was unique, through the intercultural ‘experiment’ on the sound spelling, the students could understand that people from different linguistic background behaved differently for a reason. As long as we are willing to position ourselves into the perspectives of others, we are able to understand something that we could not before. This could bring the sense of achievement that stimulates the students to keep an open mind and might contribute to building tolerance of ideas and practices.

For the teacher-researcher, introducing the concept of Pinyin to the students was very important. As Lee and Kalyuga (2011) state:

> For many learners whose native language is an alphabetic one, learning Chinese as a foreign language can be a harsh journey because the Chinese writing system shares no similarities with their native language (p.1099)… Pinyin, a modern phonic transcription system, is used to assist learners in learning pronunciation of characters (p.1100).

Overall, this teaching content was successful as an introduction of a new language to the students. The teacher-researcher actually was using the language itself as a resource that allowed the students to reflect on their own language and to raise their understanding of the target language as having a unique cultural element.

4.2.2 Unique Chinese cultural concept—The Yin-Yang philosophy

The teacher-researcher continued the content selection process of using *unique Chinese culture as the resource,* by proposing Yin-Yang as a focus. The following teaching and learning scenario was recorded by the teacher-researcher.

> After I had lived in Sydney for some time, when I went shopping I had noticed that there were many accessories and/or clothes designed or embellished with the Chinese cultural symbol—Yin-Yang. Therefore I thought students might be *familiar* with this symbol but perhaps might not really *understand* the deep cultural meaning behind it. So I decided that I could introduce the Yin-Yang culture to the students in my classroom but at the same time, I thought to allow them to make their own meaning on this cultural emblem. When I presented the Yin-Yang picture to the students, some immediately called out "Oh Yin-Yang!" Someone even told me that he could recognize the two fish within the emblem. I continued by asking the students if they knew the meaning of Yin-Yang. Quite a few students raised their hands and they told me that Yin-Yang meant "Balance", "Peace" or "Changes". Another offered the explanation that Yin-Yang represented the "Day and Night". I realized the classroom teachers in this school had already introduced this Chinese culture element and had taught its essential value and meaning. However, I also observed that the definitions the teachers had previously given were basic and simplified—no doubt to help the young

learners to understand and memorize. When I heard these answers, I felt like the Yin-Yang in their understanding was different to what I knew and understood. The cultural meaning seemed somehow to have been paraphrased. Yin-Yang in my mind was two natural complementary and contradictory forces in the universe. These forces are continually in a state of flux and are always looking for the 'balanced' point. In addition, Chinese people more popularly would refer to *Taiji* rather than Yin-Yang. I am not sure why Australian people prefer Yin-Yang, but my guess was that the pronunciation of "Yin-Yang" is easier for them. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Week 4, Term 4, 2014)

In order to deepen the students' understanding of Yin-Yang, I decided to tell them a story based on a Chinese classic idiom "塞翁失马焉知非", which means "Misfortune May be an Actual Blessing". (See the story script in Appendix 5) When I told the students that this story was very popular in China and most Chinese students their age knew this story, I observed that the students appeared very excited and interested to know the story. They sat quietly and attentively to show that they were ready for the story. The moral of this story is that *"Good things might turn into bad things in some circumstances and vice versa"*. But later on I realised this message might be too abstract for them and this value/moral could be too complicated for the students at this age. They didn't act as if they enjoyed learning this cultural story. Perhaps it was more like I was 'forcing' them to accept my understanding of Yin-Yang. They preferred to make their own meaning of it based on the knowledge they had already gleaned from their experiences. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Week 4, Term 4, 2014)

Analysis and reflection

Choosing this unique cultural concept as lesson content did cause the teacher-researcher to reflect that it might be a challenge, but the decision to include it was based on the observation that the students already had some ideas about it and it also seemed that Australia had attached a certain importance to this cultural concept. The

teacher-researcher had the aim of introducing the students to the deeper meaning of Yin-Yang as a cultural concept rather than a simple, decorative icon.

However, from the students' responses, the teacher-researcher observed that students at this age (10-11 years) were unable to think as deeply as initially expected. This appeared to be the reason why the local Chinese language teachers in this school reduced the cultural information keeping only the basic meaning—to ensure the lesson content was age appropriate. The additional cultural message the teacher-researcher supplied in this lesson actually added a learning burden to the students. As this story was an example of Chinese unique culture, the teacher-researcher spent extended time trying to explain the meaning behind the story. In this way, there was very little Chinese language covered. The word "Ma (the horse)" was the only language element that was taught and practised (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.1). The balance between the culture and language was not reached.

In the context of introducing this content (the cultural story with the unique Chinese meaning of the Yin-Yang), the teacher-researcher concluded that there was very little intercultural interaction between the content, the teacher-researcher and the students. The only resource the teacher-researcher could use was the students' previous understanding of Yin-Yang and their meaning-making on it. A significant learning for the teacher-researcher herself (professional learning) as an outcome of this lesson was that one should never force others to understand a culture in a fixed way. Although the concept of Yin-Yang is based on the factual cultural knowledge illustrated in the cultural story chosen, if the teacher stubbornly adheres to her/his beliefs and understanding of this cultural icon, and asks her students do the same, it may be that the learning opportunity has been lost for this and subsequent lessons

4.2.3 Unique Chinese greetings—a traditional expression for communication

The importance of greetings as a method of teaching intercultural understanding has been espoused for decades.

> The more speakers understand the cultural context of the greetings, the better the society appreciates them … (Schleicher (1997, p.334)

Schleicher's (1997) research was undertaken with the Yorba people in Africa, but it could be argued that the findings have cross-cultural significance. For example:

> ….greetings carry culture-specific messages that must be understood if the language learner is to interact positively with members of [a] society (p.342).

For such reasons the teacher-researcher focused on a unique Chinese greeting as content that would be very worthwhile for students to learn. For students to be introduced to a communicative practice in an authentic Chinese way, the teacher-researcher decided to focus on a typical Chinese 'cultural' greeting, that is, 你吃了吗 (The literal translation: "Did you have your breakfast/lunch/dinner?") As this literal translation might have been confusing for the students, the teacher-researcher decided to include lesson content to support the understanding of the cultural background of this greeting. Therefore, the following lesson was planned and delivered:

> I told the students that if they were living in China, they might hear a special kind of greeting sometimes—in addition to the commonly used universal one ("Ni hao :Hello"). I explained: "In our daily lives, Chinese people may greet each other using '你吃了吗' ? The students were sitting quietly and waited for me to continue. On the board I showed the students both the Chinese Pinyin and the English translation then asked them, "Have you ever expected that someone would greet you in this way? If someone asked you, "Did you have your lunch? What would you think?" No one answered. I continued, "Actually if Chinese people ask you 你吃了吗, s/he is not really asking you about your lunch or dinner. They are just showing they care for you. I explained that the meaning behind this greeting was actually the same as in English, "How are you?" The classroom was very quiet. It seemed like they were all listening very carefully, but when I questioned the class for their understanding, only the students sitting at the front and the ones I was looking at, nodded in a reluctant way. Even the classroom teacher gave me a confused expression. I didn't attempt a further explanation, realizing the

> teacher was also confused (as from time to time the teacher would help me by re-explaining some ideas to the students for me—that is, if she understood). In this instance she was also quiet, so I was afraid that she didn't understand as well. I decided to skip any further explanation at this point. I realized this was a problem created by my limited oral English. This content for 'greetings' carried so many cultural messages that there needed to be more preparation to engage the children's understanding. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Week 7, Term 4, 2014)

Analysis and reflection

The reason the teacher-researcher chose this content was to expose the students to an authentic communication context where the intercultural understanding of different greetings could be raised. However，it failed because of two reasons. On the one hand, the teacher-researcher did not leave sufficient time for the students to reflect on their ways of greeting, and on the other, the teacher-researcher did not adequately explain why Chinese people sometimes express their greeting in this way. The full cultural explanation relates to a time in history (when there was a shortage of food) and the national psychology (care for others in terms of available food and the living conditions). In this lesson, the two ends of the intercultural understanding bridge (between the Australian students own culture and the full story behind the unique Chinese greeting) were missing.

The failure of the cultural learning led to the failure of the language learning. The teacher-researcher should have realized it was actually a more complicated cultural topic that would have needed more in-depth preparation over several lessons to support students' learning to fully understand this unique culture and the associated target language.

Summary

Including unique Chinese culture as lesson content could be an advantage for intercultural language learning however in this research, it had disadvantages as the teacher-researcher was unable to organize the resources and handle the delivery most efficiently to support the students' understanding and learning.

With enthusiasm and eagerness to share authentic Chinese culture with the students at the Gardens Public School, the decision was made to include this content at the beginning of the teacher-researcher's language teaching journey. Upon reflection, it took more time to explain the unique cultural elements which meant less time for language learning, and hence the balance between culture and language content was lost, the abstract concepts were difficult to explain to 10-11 year old students which resulted in their misunderstanding and loss of interest and the teacher-researcher concluded that; the more unique the culture was, the more the understanding gap widened between the children and the content, the delivery of the lesson and the outcomes.

4.3 Comparable culture

After this reflection on the teaching content that drew on examples of *unique Chinese culture* the realization was that this content was actually a challenge for the beginning teacher-researcher and also that the cultural gap could cause the students some anxiety and loss of confidence in learning this new language. The cultural gap provides no hook for the students' previous knowledge and experience, as Lee and Kalyuga (2011) suggest:

> In the absence of a relevant prior knowledge base learners are dealing with many new elements of information in an unguided random way that may cause cognitive overload (p.1101)

Other researchers have explored this concept under the umbrella term 'authentic learning' where:

> The term authentic learning experiences is used to describe the learning opportunities that teachers design that aim to facilitate participation in the ordinary practices and events of a group (Mantei and Kervin, 2009, p.3).

Therefore, the decision was made to move the focus of the teaching content to topics with which the students were more familiar with and those which could still provide

opportunities for discussion, sharing and exploring the similarities and differences in an intercultural way. Colour was hence chosen as the topic and an entry point.

4.3.1 Colours

> I selected eight commonly used colours as the content for introducing new vocabulary to the students. In order to teach them in an intercultural way, I searched for pictures of some Chinese items or aspects of cultural heritage that were generally associated with specific colours. For instance, the yellow Imperial Robe, the blue Chinese Cloisonne (a traditional Chinese porcelain), the black and white panda, and the red Chinese wedding dress and lantern. I showed the students each picture in turn, included a brief description and asked them to tell me the names of each colour in English. I continued by demonstrating the Chinese words for the colours and asking the students to repeat after me. This content appeared to engage the students well because they appeared happy to see something that was from another country.
>
> For the intercultural discussion, I asked the students to tell me which colour/s they liked best. Students offered answers very positively. Then I decided to have a vote to see which colour was the most popular amongst them. To my surprise, blue was the overwhelming favourite colour for both classes. I asked the students, "Why?" They explained: the sky in Australia is very blue, the colour for New South Wales is blue, and their school uniform was blue. I reflected that this was a very valuable message for intercultural learning. I continued by sharing my favourite colour (red) and some popular colours in China in certain situations. The students were very interested and some of them liked the blue Chinese porcelain very much. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Week 4, Term 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

The content for the language learning in this case was less culturally embedded. The key learning language was 'liberated' from the complicated cultural meanings. Different from the unique culture, the key learning words here had a language focus

—'colours', with this topic being a common concept for people from any cultural background.

Choosing lesson content such as 'colours' provided more opportunities for the teacher-researcher to enrich the cultural component by the use of meaningful teaching resources to support the intercultural learning. These resources, in this lesson, the culturally-embedded pictures, engaged the students well and they stimulated the students to learn the language.

During the lesson discussion, intercultural interaction was built as the students enthusiastically participated to share their personal preferences for colours. Their answers inspired the teacher-researcher so that in return, she offered her colour preference. This section of the lesson was an engaging inter-personal conversation. From the reasons given by the students, the teacher-researcher realized that the personal preference (individual culture/ discrete culture), in this case colour, was very much shaped by the impact of significant aspects within the community or environment (collective culture/overarching culture) where the person is situated.

4.3.2 Numbers

> After we finished the colour topic, I introduced the new teaching content—numbers. For the oral language content, the way I taught the numbers was that I used the Chinese finger gestures for numbers as actions to engage the students. In the classroom, I asked the students to demonstrate to me the way they did numbers with their hands. I noticed that after five, students started to use two hands to represent the numbers between six and ten. As something quite new, I showed them the way Chinese people can represent the numbers six to ten by using only one hand. Students felt very surprised and they thought it was fun to do those 'strange' finger gestures. A positive outcome was that students were more impressed with the numbers six to ten and they especially recalled *six* because it was the first number they learned by using the Chinese method of finger gesture for numbers larger than five on the one hand. After the students became familiar with all of the numbers (one to ten), I was able to use the Chinese words and the associated finger

gestures when giving teaching instructions in future lessons. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Week 7, Term 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

With the positive experience from the teaching of colours, the teacher-researcher appreciated that language content more easily comprehended, could more readily facilitate intercultural language learning. Therefore, the topic of 'numbers' was chosen as furthering the goal of intercultural connections and learning. This was because numbers were used by all people in their daily lives, and the meaning of numbers was already part of the students' prior knowledge. This topic was a comparable cultural component for English and Chinese.

The resource the teacher-researcher chose for this learning content was the body-language/finger and hand gestures for numbers. Intercultural interaction was enhanced when the teacher exchanged on one hand. Both cultures shared a commonality of finger gestures for the number one to five. However, for the numbers six to ten, the difference was highlighted and in that moment the students showed more interest and became engaged in both the cultural learning and language learning.

4.3.3 Animals

In an earlier lesson the teacher taught the students some introductory knowledge about the Twelve Zodiac Animals. To consider the Chinese "Twelve Zodiac Animals" as possible content for lessons, it fulfilled the criterion of being a cultural topic, but the teacher-researcher was now mindful that there also needed to be opportunities for intercultural content to be covered in lessons. (There would not be time to introduce each of the twelve animals in a detailed intercultural way at that point in the teaching assignment. It would have been possible if the teacher-researcher had planned a whole term's work around this content, over twelve weeks. At that time it was not a realistic option. Reflecting on all these issues the teacher-researcher decided to select some of the animals that carried a deep cultural meaning in order for the students to reflect on, and

compare to, their own culture. The example/journal excerpt provided below has featured the ‘fish’ lesson.

> The Chinese word for fish (or sometimes more specifically carp) is “鱼”, and because the pronunciation for 鱼 is the same as another Chinese word “余”, which means ‘spare’, ‘extra’ and ‘prosperity’, Chinese people love to use this coincidence to convey a further meaning to FISH. This additional meaning is ‘good will’. When I taught the students this cultural meaning for fish, it seemed that they could not connect the word ‘FISH’ with ‘PROSPERITY’. I asked the students to give me a keyword to tell me their feelings about FISH. The students gave me these answers, “Fast, slippery, hard to catch”. The answers were not as diverse as I thought they might have been, and the students were not that interested in answering this question. I reflected that this might be because I didn’t provide them with any visual support for the real fish, and that my questioning didn’t lead them towards some deeper thinking.

Figure 4.2: Resource to accompany the lesson to teach “鱼”(fish)

I showed the picture (Figure 4.3—Searched and downloaded from google) to the students who responded that it appeared “very exotic”. However, at that moment I focused more on teaching the Chinese character “鱼” and the expression of “年年有余/鱼 (which can be seen on the top of this picture, which means ‘Wish you have more than you want each year’) in order for

students to acquire this vocabulary and be able to practice these later in other activities. This cultural information did strengthen the arts-making activity that followed (see Chapter 6, section 6.4.2).

Overall, there was a missed opportunity for intercultural discussion. I did not ask the students questions (which I should have), such as "Do you know why the boy is holding the fish? Can you guess the meaning or importance of the fish in this picture?" These questions may have prompted some positive and engaging intercultural discussion.

After the lesson, I tried to be more self-reflective on the cultural meaning of FISH by asking myself "What is my first impression or sense for the fish?" I had to be honest and admit my personal idea would be "smelly, scales, slippery", quite similar to the students'. Then I realized that this cultural meaning of FISH that I was trying to explain to the students, was actually a very old and traditional view that was generated in a particular time period and that had been carried over by generations until the present day. Chinese people keep using this cultural form in one particular instance of the year (Chinese New Year), but this concept was not really 'absorbed' into people's deep personal experience. (From the teacher-researcher's observation and reflection journal, Week 6, Term 1, 2016).

Analysis and reflection

The reason for choosing FISH as cultural content for language learning was because it carried a deep cultural meaning for Chinese people and could therefore possibly provide a positive opportunity for the Australian students reflect on their own culture and the significance of FISH.

However, from the students' responses, it was observed that the intercultural connection in this context was not possible. Firstly, although students were familiar with fish—as a commonly seen animal in daily life, there was no comparable cultural meaning in the Australian context. Students could only compare the Chinese cultural story of FISH with their personal experiences. Coupled with this, the lesson content

lacked support by having appropriate resources. The lack of visual resources (pictures or videos) caused students to lose interest and they were disengaged to want to reflect at all on their own thinking and the concepts being put forward by the teacher-researcher.

Another difficulty was that the Chinese cultural meaning of FISH was presented as static, factual, cultural knowledge. It had no dynamic association with the people who live in this modern era, whose personal feelings are far removed from the traditional Chinese cultural story. This cultural meaning, as with the Yin-Yang, was difficult for students to fully understand. They might have been able to remember that "年年有余/鱼" meant "Wish you have more than you want each year", but they were not necessarily able to connect the fish with this cultural message.

As for the teacher-researcher's cultural reflection, it can be said that sometimes the "overarching/big culture" could overwhelm and deceive the "discrete/small culture" at the individual level. In order to portray only the "big" culture the teacher-researcher ignored her own personal feelings of the fish, uncritically thinking that knowing the cultural meaning of 'the FISH' was exactly in tune with her personal feelings about fish in general. This was not the case. The result from reflection on this teaching experience is: Focusing on the personal culture is more likely to engage students with successful and meaningful intercultural language learning.

4.3.4 Chinese names

Additional content/topic ideas the teacher-researcher chose was to highlight the difference between Chinese and English names. This content choice was based on two reasons. The first one was that the students had previously shown an interest in discovering the Chinese translation for their own name. They had asked me, "Miss, what is my Chinese name?", "How do you say my name in Chinese?", and even, "So, how exactly do you say my Chinese name in English?" Their questions pointed to a misunderstanding about how and why people name their children. The second reason for this content choice was that this topic could be used to include some

important linguistic and cultural messages that could be taught through choosing relevant resources and the associated intercultural discussions.

The following excerpt has been taken from the teacher-researcher's reflection journal.

> Comparing names for Chinese and Australian people was content that provided a good opportunity to learn more about Chinese characters, the surnames (see the related activity in Chapter 6, section 6.2.2) and the given names of people. For example, in China, the written language is the Chinese characters, not the alphabet as in English, and each Chinese character in someone's name has a meaning (some English names, especially first names do not carry any meaning). Other differences I thought to include in this content were: Chinese names that were all one syllable and the way children's names were chosen. Each of these differences reflected different cultural values between Chinese and Australian people.
>
> I continued by presenting the content to the students as: "The differences between Chinese and English names". The students mentioned that some of them had a middle name and this was another identifiable difference as Chinese people did not have one. The classroom teacher mentioned that English speakers would name their children from the Bible. I explained that Chinese people did not, but that some names were taken from 'knowledgeable' visionaries or maybe taken from the Chinese dictionary. Some students commented that Chinese people put their surnames first, while Australian people put the given names at the front. There was even one student who eagerly informed the class that he had a family member who was from Greece who shared the same name with his grand-father. I entered the conversation to state that this would never be the case in China. It was a lively discussion and all the children were engaged and had something to say. The classroom teacher also participated by confirming some of the ideas I had proposed and by providing some examples from his knowledge and experiences.
>
> By the end of the lesson the students understood that there was no authentic

> corresponding Chinese name for them simply based on their English names, because of the different cultures around naming children and the different traits of the language itself. (From the teacher-researcher's observation and reflection journal, Week 8, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

Selecting Chinese names as a topic was essentially introducing content that provided rich possibilities for comparing two different cultures, along with which, the students also learned some target language.

Throughout the discussions, the teacher-researcher observed that the awareness of the intercultural understanding of the students was raised. Students were able to give clear statements about the differences between Chinese names and English names.

The reason why this intercultural discussion was relatively successful was that the content itself was a personal issue—everyone has a name. Everyone has an understanding of their own name and often those in their wider family. Therefore, it was easier for the students to have something to say or share, and they were able to adequately acquire the Chinese linguistic and cultural knowledge of this content.

4.3.5 Mother's Day[1]

Using the Australian cultural activity of Mother's Day was selected as content for the lessons to be taught around that date. In Australia, the second Sunday in May is always the date for Mother's Day. The content for this lesson was delivered as follows:

> The topic for today's lesson was "Mother's Day" since it was coming at the end of the week. I thought this topic would engage the students because everyone would have something to say and share about their mothers. For the topic content, I planned to show the students' what Chinese people would

[1] Mother's Day is actually a borrowed culture in China, although Chinese people do celebrate it. This topic was included to enhance an intercultural discussion about how people express their feelings towards their mothers in both Australia and China.

do for their mothers on Mother's Day (through real-life pictures searched from Internet) and the classic image/story of a Chinese mother (the mother who always working hard and even sacrificed herself for the offspring) (through a video). The key language I planned to teach for this topic was an oral sentence: "Ni xinku le". It was a sentence that every child in China would say to their mother on Mother's Day. "Ni" meaning "you", "xinku" meaning "working hard/tired", and "le", the past tense form of the word to show sentiment. Interestingly, there is no such word in English. The closest translation I found was the sentence: "[Thank you] for working hard [and making the great effort to our family]!" Based on this content, the intercultural discussion could be: 1).What would you do on Mother's Day and what would you say to your Mum? and 2). What is a 'good' mum in your eyes? (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Week 5, Term 3, 2015)

For the first question, students answered that they would make breakfast in bed for their mothers. This was portrayed as a tradition in Australia. Alternatively, in the evening, the family might take the mother to dine out. Some students shared that they would make cards or buy flowers for their mum. On Mother's Day most of the students indicated they would say "I love you Mom", or "Have a nice day". For me, these expressions of their wishes and feelings were more casual and positive, while the Chinese tradition would be more formal. This gap led to difficulty when they tried to learn the key sentence I planned. Students kept asking me, "What does that mean?" and they felt it was not really what they would say on Mother's Day. For the second question, the students told me that a good mother in their eyes was: "Funny! Making good food! Drove the children to school! Taught the child right from wrong!" It is interesting to hear these answers. I told the students that my point of view was that a mum who always understood and supported her children was a good mother. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 5, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

This teaching content, Mother's Day, was very familiar to the students. The content was supported by the pictures and a video as resources to engage students with real and authentic experiences external to the language classroom.

In comparison to the previous topics and content selected, Mother's Day enabled a firm and clear focus, sufficient materials, highly related language learning and good intercultural discussions that allowed the students and the Chinese teacher-researcher to know and understand each other more. It was during the discussion that the teacher-researcher realized that the students had difficulty understanding the target key learning sentence, "Ni xinku le" as there was no such expression in the English context. The gap in the intercultural understanding led to the unsuccessful process of language learning, which meant the teaching topic was appropriate, however the language learning outcome or the target vocabulary chosen, was not.

"Ni xinku le" can be thought of as a unique expression in Chinese. The teacher-researcher reflected that the specific translation of this phrase was the cause of the difficulty for the students. In fact, considering that if this phrase had been taught without the cultural meaning, that is, by introduction, practice and memorization, the students might have felt less reluctant to engage with this new vocabulary. This is, however, the teacher-researcher's hypothesis.

4.3.6 School life

When I taught the topic of '*Chinese students' school life'*, the keywords for the lesson were the names of the subject areas the children were studying. These were: 数学(Maths), 汉语(Chinese),英语(English), 音乐(Music) and, 美术(Art). For each subject, I showed the students pictures of what the students in China would do during these lessons. For each picture, I would ask the students to learn the key Chinese word with me after the brief introduction of the school study life in China. To compare, I also asked the students to tell me what they would be doing for each subject in their school. The discussion continued as I asked them to nominate their favourite

subject/s. The students were eager to share this element of their culture with me.

I then continued to introduce the target language and school life culture in China for the subject 音乐 (Music) I explained what Chinese students would be doing in a music lesson by showing a picture, which was to play a special instrument—this was my real experience in my primary school.

The students told me that they had never seen this kind of instrument before. They didn't know how it worked. I explained to them that you needed to blow through the tube, as was shown in the picture. To play this instrument the students would blow and press the keyboard at the same time. The classroom teacher was also interested. She added her comment to the students that "So it is like a very practical and economic piano."

I was very happy to hear the teacher had been able to interpret my content to students in this way. But after some time, one boy called out, "That was stupid." I was quite embarrassed at that time. I had no idea how to quickly respond to the negative comment. Shortly after, another student replied to this negative comment by saying, "XXX (The boy's name), that was AWESOME!" The classroom teacher also reacted to warn that student that he was being so rude and she emphasized that the instrument was different but not stupid. The boy became silent and he looked embarrassed. He didn't expect that his opinion would bring him into this confrontation. I felt very grateful that the classroom teacher and another student interjected to speak for me. I felt it was very kind of them. I didn't have much discourse power in this context. The people from the boy's community background could 'correct' him more easily and successfully. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Week 3, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

Compared to the previous teaching content selected, this topic was more systemic with much of the cultural elements closely aligned with the Australian students'

personal lives. The key learning words chosen as part of this content covered almost all the subjects that the students were familiar with. Resources were provided for engagement with both the language and culture learning. When considering the subjects studied in class, the school life in China and Australia were similar and in this regard the language and culture learning was successful.

However, there was the issue of the student's negative response (to the photograph of the musical instrument) that was noteworthy for the teacher-researcher's professional learning.

This lesson reminded the teacher-researcher that the cultural elements being so eagerly presented could be seen by students as both 'welcome' and 'unacceptable'. To some extent, it was an advantage that the boy called out the negative response, so that the teacher-researcher could receive more feedback from the students and understand their personality and position more fully. In this circumstance the teacher-researcher was not quick to reply to the student. The other students and the classroom teacher interjected. In future, the teacher-researcher would be better prepared to respond in a similar situation. Pointing out to the student that, "There is nothing stupid/creepy/disgusting about [the issue under discussion]; it is just different," was noted as a positive approach to working through the students' negative emotional statement toward the target culture. Students in this age might sometimes react 'rudely', especially when confronted by differences they do not understand. This does provide opportunities to point out a more appropriate way to respond to something they do not necessarily agree with. The point to try to convey would be to *always respect others*. This has provided another example of why the intercultural language learning is essential and valuable.

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 A guiding principle for content selection

In Chinese, there is an expression "求同存异" that can be related to the discussion about choosing relevant and meaningful content for language and culture learning.

Respectively: “求” means seeking/looking forward, “同” denotes commonality/similarities, “存” refers to keeping/saving/reserving, and “异” indicates differences/diversities. In total the meaning is represented as: **“Seeking common ground while reserving the differences”**. This expression encourages a peaceful attitude when it comes to different opinions, views, preferences and all other cultural components that may influence people’s actions.

In its original context, this expression has been noted as focusing more on “同”, (similarities or commonalities) while the “异” (differences and uniqueness) was put aside—or even ignored.

Therefore, for this chapter, the teacher-researcher would like to draw on this expression, but re-organize it to “存异求同” when referring to intercultural language teaching and learning. By changing the order of the characters, the meaning is hence changed to: **“Comparing the differences while reaching for the common humanity”.**

It has been proposed here as a principle, for the teacher-researcher when choosing the teaching content, the relative resources and the teaching approaches, that aligns with the target language and culture to be taught.

This concept has been included as it builds on the concept of intercultural contact and adjustment. Student responses to the teaching content can be varied and as such the teacher should consider students’ likely responses to “exotic” content.

Peng and Wu (2016) pointed out that the majority of research on intercultural contact overemphasizes “correct” or “optimal” contact conditions. Most studies only focused on the contact that appeared in the context of optimal conditions. Thus, such studies may not adequately reflect everyday contact existing in groups and individuals’ actual lives. Moreover, investigations on idealized intercultural contact may have neglected groups and individuals’ intercultural contact in complex, real-life situations. This suggests that we should not only focus on the harmonious factors but also those differences that may cause conflicts.

Chang (2009) argued that many researchers had identified various emotional stages in the cultural adjustment. As Hannigan (cited in Chang, 2009) noted, cultural adjustment involves a psychological process of reaching an harmonious status between the individual and his/her environment. When encountering new situations or problems, people use their stored knowledge to perceive their environment and select corresponding strategies. The Chinese learning content could be something new to the students and therefore either an interesting learning point or a frustrating experience. The aim is to invite the students to understand the differences and also the commonalities.

4.4.2 The learners

Throughout the teacher-researcher's reflections on content selection as part of the lesson design (step four of the Xingzhi/AR cycle), there was cause to highlight an additional resource that needed to be considered in the teaching and learning cycles. This resource can be the learners themselves.

> One resource is available for the language learning is rarely adopted by the language teachers. This is the language produced by learners themselves (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p.99).

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argue that this "languaging", could be a powerful resource for generating further thinking and discussion when it involves interpretation and the expression of reflection on the target language and culture. The teacher-researcher has been able to identify opportunities where the students themselves were used as resources to further the language learning in class. Examples were:

- The student who displayed the Chinese "bow" in a situation where it should not have 'properly' been used.
- The boy who thought the key learning sentence "Ni xinku le" was actually a word due to his instinct sense of English syllables.
- The student who suggested the upper right section of the Chinese surname

"杨" looked like "Z" to him.

All of these cases reminded the teacher-researcher that the learners' prior perspectives may be incorrect or based on misunderstandings. These provided opportunities to reflect and improve/adjust her teaching content or perspective so that the intercultural content could be more meaningfully presented to the students. This was another example of how the teacher-researcher implemented the Xingzhi/AR in practice.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the first contributory research question:

> What teaching content (Key learning words/Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?

The teacher-researcher implemented an approach to Chinese language teaching and learning that went beyond a purely linguistic approach which would focus on linguistics and translation and has proposed the need for a balance between language and culture in all aspects of the second language teaching. The importance of including cultural elements in language teaching has been reported in the literature:

> An effective method and practical technique of teaching culture is very important in language teaching, so every teacher should realize its importance and necessity and find some practical techniques to carry out culture teaching in language teaching. Mehrnoush & Sayadian (2015, p.216)

These practical techniques need to be employed at the beginning of lesson design at the content selection stage. Throughout the exploration of this research question (relating to content selection), and based on the data collected and analysed, the teacher-researcher developed her teaching by testing different topics and the types of the cultural exchanges. She moved from the static point of view (traditional very unique cultural issues) to a dynamic one when choosing and analyzing the cultural

content—cultural elements that were comparable for the students[1]. The more personal and comparable the content was, the more dynamic, the intercultural interaction that resulted.

On the basis of the findings from the exploration of this research question the following framework/guidelines for Chinese language learning and teaching with an intercultural approach for beginning learners in primary school are proposed:

For beginning teachers when designing Chinese language lessons that draw on cultural content:

- In the beginning stages of teaching young learners, content which drew on *unique Chinese culture,* especially those with abstract content, was found to be less successful; time for explanation resulted in less time for language learning and the balance of language and culture in the lessons was not achieved.
- Topics and content that drew on concrete cultural content, such as colours, numbers and the topics close to students' daily lives (school life and special days in Australian culture), were more successful in providing opportunities for students to give their personal perspective or personal meaning-making. This content provided a successful means of engaging students with the target language and culture.
- Once the teacher gains more experience (and knows the students more comprehensively) or if a beginning teacher has a class of students who are in secondary school, the content incorporating abstract cultural elements (the *unique Chinese culture*) could be introduced.
- The content chosen must take account of the students' age, cognitive level and connect to their previous language and cultural knowledge (of their own and the target language) in order that the *comparable cultural content* chosen is at an appropriate level.
- The content should be balanced between the language and culture.

[1] This process reflects the Xingzhi/AR methodology that was implemented in this research.

The teaching content for intercultural language learning should stimulate the learners' insight, provide opportunities for students to see the target culture through meaningful language in context and the discussions need to raise the intercultural awareness.

The thesis now continues with Chapter 5 as the discussion turns to the section of the research that explored scaffolding as a strategy for intercultural language learning.

CHAPTER 5
SCAFFOLDING AS A TEACHING STRATEGY FOR INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

5.0 Introduction

This chapter has addressed the second contributory research question:

> What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking?

Scaffolding in this chapter refers to a teaching strategy implemented to develop students' intercultural understanding through learning the Chinese language in an intercultural context, that is, to create and build on links between students' existing language and cultural knowledge and the new knowledge as it is introduced. These links have been used to scaffold the activities in and across the lessons to base lessons on an authentic Chinese context. The aim has been to scaffold children's learning experiences to promote success, and structure the learning to happen 'naturally'. The scaffolding in this intercultural language learning context also has attempted to engage students to notice, compare, wonder and reflect critically on their understanding of language, culture and identity of themselves and others.

Chapter 5 has been organized around the key findings from the analysis of the data and includes discussion of 5.1) using students' previous knowledge to explain new knowledge; 5.2) making comparisons between students' first language and culture

through skillful questioning (polar, display and referential); 5.3) scaffolding trans-language practice in an intercultural context and 5.4) Visualization as a type of scaffolding strategy. A discussion and conclusion completes the second evidentiary chapter.

5.1 Explaining new cultural knowledge by using students' previous knowledge

The following data excerpt has focused on an incident where a Chinese calligraphy writing sheet was introduced.

> When I introduced the Chinese calligraphy writing sheet to the students, I wanted them to experience what Chinese students might actually be doing in China to practice character writing. This was the first time this group of students had seen this type of Chinese writing sheet. I wanted to introduce it to them in detail so that they could understand why Chinese people had designed the sheet in this particular way and why it suited the Chinese characters. When I asked the students, "Do you know why we put these dotted lines in the box?" no one answered. So I continued with the explanation. Still the students looked confused and they didn't give me any response. On reflection, I realized the way I asked the question was not appropriate. How could the students know the answer since this was the first time they had seen this kind of activity sheet. So in the next class I decided to take a different approach to aid their understanding. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journals, Week 2, Term 3, 2015).

> I asked the students, "When you practice your English alphabet writing, you practice in lines, right?" Then I drew the lines on the board. The students nodded and said "Yes". I continued with the explanation and questioning, "Then why do you think we might need these lines?" There were a few students who raised their hands and answered, "To make the writing neat." This was exactly the answer that I expected to hear, so I took this opportunity to confirm the answer, "That's right! Same in Chinese! These

dotted lines guide you to put the Character in the box neatly. The reason why we have a different sheet for Chinese and English is because the written format of these two languages are…?" "Different", the students completed the sentence. Then I knew the students understood this time. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journals, Week 2, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

To assist with clear explanations and language learning, "questioning is a central part of developing interactive language in the classroom" (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 42). Similarly "the important roles of questioning in language classrooms are to facilitate students to have comprehensible input, to trigger students to produce language production (output), and to create interaction in classroom (Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2014, p.97).

Two types of questioning have been noted as those frequently used by teachers to establish "interaction in communicative language teaching" (Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2014, p.96). These are *display questions* (generally used to prompt language practice) and *referential questions* (which require students to provide information, opinions, solve problems and/or develop imagination). On reflection and analysis of the data excerpt above, the teacher-researcher used scaffolded referential questioning to encourage interaction in the classroom.

The Chinese calligraphy sheet was a new concept for the learners. From the data above, when the teacher-researcher asked "Do you know why we put these dotted lines in the box?" she was actually asking a 'referential question', which confused the students because there was no link to *the students' previous knowledge* and hence they were unable to answer. The teacher-researcher wrongly expected the students to understand a new concept (a new cultural item in this case) without any prior knowledge. The connecting bridge for the intercultural learning was missing and could have made the students feel anxious, and so none were confident to risk an answer to explain what they thought. The teacher-researcher had the responsibility to guide the students to explore the new cultural element in a way they could understand, that is, through scaffolding and linking to some familiar knowledge. The

teacher-researcher reflected on this and changed the question to "Why do you need lines in your English writing sheet?" This question was asked to *invite students to reflect on their own culture first.* The students could answer this question because the answer was from their prior knowledge. They could understand why they needed the lines for their English alphabet writing and subsequently and correctly applied this reasoning to understand the new cultural element.

Scaffolding this learning experience for students might have taken longer than a straight explanation by the teacher-researcher but was time well spent. It drew on students' prior experiences and provided the opportunity for the students to see the similarity for students in China. It was like putting oneself in another's shoes. The data excerpt below further demonstrates this as a powerful strategy to support intercultural understanding.

> With the introduction of the writing sheet, I told the students that "In China, the students the same age as you, would practice their hand-writing in a way totally different from yours." The students looked at me in silence with a curious face. I then demonstrated how to write in the sheet. When the students saw the way I wrote the Chinese characters within the box, they marveled with "Wow!" All of a sudden, there was a boy who asked me a question with a caring face, "So, Miss, since you learned like this, how could you understand and speak in our language?"
>
> I was surprised by his question but also felt very touched by his caring and his attempt to understand my background. I reflected that the reason he asked this question was possibly because he thought the Chinese language I have just demonstrated was all anyone in China would learn. I continued our conversation: "It was because I started to learn English when I was a middle school student. I have been learning English for over ten years! That's why I could teach Chinese to you in English. Now you are learning Chinese, maybe one day you will go to China to teach English!" "Ohhh…" was their reaction and some of the students giggled (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Week 2, Term 3, 2015).

Analysis and reflection

The data above has presented an interlude that happened in the classroom. The teacher-researcher described an authentic situation from her Chinese language learning in China to the students in Australia. Students were amazed by this demonstration of the new cultural element—the Chinese character writing on the sheet. It offered them an almost 'exotic' context that inspired them to reflect on their own language and culture. The question that the student asked revealed an example of a 'change-place-reflect' thinking. In Chinese there is a similar concept, which is "换位思考 (To put oneself into another's shoe or to think the way of others). Emotional empathy was raised between the student and the teacher-researcher which was also experienced by the other students in the class. It was a very positive experience and intercultural understanding was built.

5.2 Making deliberate comparisons with the first language and culture

Two methods of comparing and connecting to the learners' first language and culture were trialed and analyzed in the Chinese language lessons.

5.2.1 Scaffolding—linking language learning and actions

> At the start of today's lesson I again asked a question as the ice-breaker: "Can you tell me any instructions you might hear your teacher say in the classroom so it is orderly and everyone behaves?" The students raised their hands and were very confident because the answers were familiar—what they heard their teacher say every day. I recorded their answers: "Speak politely. Walk in two lines. Be quiet when the teacher is talking. Fold your arms. Back on the chair and feet on the floor. Sit properly. Be good. Listen quietly. Hands up, if you want to talk."
>
> I wrote down the students' answers on the board as a list and left some space for the same instructional word or phrase in Chinese. I found that there were many similar expressions used by teachers in China and Australia. I

commented to the students, “In China, we have similar kinds of classroom instructions.” I paused at this point during the explanation, looking at the students. They listened carefully, expecting more to follow. I continued, “Today we are going to learn four of them.” I went closer to the board and underlined the English instructional words: “Sit properly”, “Listen quietly”, “Hands up”, and “Be quiet”. When I underlined “Hands up”, I explained to the students that “For hands up, in Chinese we say 举手”. Some of the students began to repeat the words before I asked them to do so. They were eager to know how to express these words in Chinese. I then asked them to demonstrate the physical action of “Hands up”. Most of the students raised one hand in the air like doing the gesture “Number one”. They responded quite casually. I continued by showing them the Chinese “hands up” with saying 举手. Some of the students started to imitate initially by repeating saying 举手. They appeared to enjoy this activity. The positive outcome was that afterwards, some students kept practicing the Chinese style “hands-up” when they wanted to answer the questions. (From the teacher-researcher’s reflection journals, Term 3, Week 5, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

In order to invite the students to notice and compare, the teacher-researcher implemented a series of questions that were scaffolded to firstly begin with the students’ current English language for the key terms, followed by the introduction of the Chinese term, and then linking the Chinese language to the physical action of the vocabulary. The questions the teacher-researcher asked were examples of referential questions (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 42) which served as a bridge to compare the students’ language and cultural knowledge of classroom instructional language with the new Chinese terms/vocabulary. The questions stimulated students to first reflect on their own culture and provide some positive responses. The answers recorded in the reflection journal were provided by the students and elicited recall of information from their everyday knowledge in their L1. Students were highly engaged since they were willing to share their cultural knowledge with the teacher-researcher. This interactive connection was built through the scaffolded questioning technique.

For the students to think in an intercultural way, a comparative list was made by the teacher-researcher. The students were guided to compare the Australian classroom culture (the words of teacher instruction) with the Chinese ones. When the teacher-researcher introduced the corresponding Chinese words to the students, no further questions were asked. However when the teacher-researcher was about to move from the English to the Chinese translation, she paused for a moment to leave time for students to think and wonder, "What about China?" Although there was no specific question asked by the teacher, there was a silent question raised inside the students' hearts. It was their curiosity. The curiosity generated by the previous questions and the deep thinking of the students beyond their own classroom.

At that moment the teacher-researcher believed the students to be highly engaged. As the teacher-researcher demonstrated the pronunciation of the Chinese equivalent for the four chosen *classroom instructional words*, the students made approximations for the pronunciation until they mastered these. Once the students had some degree of mastery over the pronunciation, the teacher-researcher introduced the gestures that accompanied the classroom instructional words. Through scaffolding the questioning and also the steps within the lesson—English words, Chinese equivalent, action/gesture, the students had a further link to assist with memorizing the new vocabulary. It was the questioning that inspired students to transfer their previous knowledge to their new Chinese language knowledge.

5.2.2 Scaffolding-linking intercultural language with the same pronunciation

As the teaching assignment with the Year 5/6 students at Gardens Public School continued, the teacher-researcher realized that if the students were required to make active intercultural comparisons, it was not only about the questions asked, but also 'how' the questions were posed.

> Since the Xini sounds close to Sydney, I thought this was a good opportunity to raise students' awareness of the phonetic similarities between Chinese and English and why this kind of similarities existed. I made a list of some typical similar sounding English and Chinese words, on the PowerPoint

(PPT). I asked the students to listen carefully, “Alright, boys and girls, now I am going to read out these Chinese words to you and you will find something very interesting if you pay close attention……” I stopped for a while and asked again, “Are you ready?” “Yes!” The students answered with a loud volume and stared at me intensively. I could see they were very interested and expected I should start as soon as possible. Then I read the English words and Chinese words out one by one from the list. Some of the students already understood what I meant even before I started the third pair. They started to call out “Ohhh~” with a very proud and confident smile. After I finished, I asked the students, “Okay, now hands up if you noticed something here.” Most of the students raised their hands so I picked one of them to answer. “They sound similar.” “Wonderful! That’s it!” Then I turned to the students who didn’t raise their hands and asked, “Do they sound similar to you?”, “No…!” The students answered with serious and critical faces. They looked as if they were rejecting this totally. I didn’t judge their responses or attitude. (From the teacher-researcher’s observation, Week 2, Term 4, 2015)

Table 5.1: Comparative pronunciation list-English and Chinese

English	**Chinese**
Wonton	Hún tun
Australia	ào dà lì yà
Sushi	Shòu sī
Ham burger	Han bao bao
Card	kǎ

Analysis and reflection

The intercultural language context was to compare the pronunciation of the words in English and in Chinese. These particular words were chosen as their pronunciations were very similar. However the teacher-researcher thought to not just introduce the list with a straight explanation of the similarity. This may have been boring for these young learners. A more engaging way was thought to be if the teacher-researcher questioned the students to notice the particular feature, similar sounding words, in order for them to discover the answer themselves; when students discover new

knowledge rather than being 'told' they would generally feel a sense of achievement. Proponents of discovery learning believe that education for all ages of people works best when the students discover the knowledge (facts and relationships) for themselves (Balim, 2009: Bruner, 2009).

When the teacher-researcher scaffolded the questioning to guide the students to explore what was the same about the two lists of words, the questions varied in pace and included words to raise their curiosity, such as "You will find…", "If you…", "interesting…". The teacher-researcher was engaging the students to think reflectively by encouraging them to use their perspectives to discover the answer to the questions posed. It was actually making the learning personal, and driving the students closer to finding the knowledge to be learned. However, not all the students could hear the similarity or see the similarity in the written lists. They gave their own personal account. They did not agree with the teacher-researcher or the other students in the class. The teacher-researcher could not force the students to accept this majority point of view. The learners' opinions were respected.

The lesson continued.

> I then started to focus on the first new Chinese word that needed to be learned, which was "Xini (Sydney)". I attempted to scaffold their thinking in this way, "You know that normally Chinese people don't speak English in China, right?" "Yes" said the students. I continued, "So when Chinese people talk about Sydney, what word do you think they may say to mean Sydney?" The students fell silent when finally one of them called out, "So how do **you** say Sydney in Chinese?"
>
> I took this opportunity to show them the word "Xini" on the board. Some of them couldn't wait and tried to pronounce this word by themselves. Then I asked them to read it after me. They were all attentive and practiced with a loud voice. This time most of the students thought it sounded similar to the English word, while still a few others didn't. Later on the students started to ask questions initiatively like "Miss, so how do you say XXX in Chinese? And oh, do you say XXX in Chinese?" They thought this kind of similarity

could be generalized. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 2, Term 4, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

When it is in a language classroom, questioning is always a good way to engage students to keep them on task and to keep the lesson progressing towards achieving its aims. In this case, the teacher-researcher made use of a language element (similar pronunciation) as the intercultural context to raise the students' curiosity and catch their attention to lead them to learn, speak and practice the target language. It worked well. The teacher-researcher posed *referential* questions as the similar sounding Chinese and English words were explored from the PPT. The teacher-researcher then used *display* questioning to which the students responded positively and practiced enthusiastically "with loud voices" to the sample words.

This interesting language phenomenon appeared to impress the students and their thinking at this point became to generalize this phenomenon. They began to question the teacher-researcher about many other Chinese words to see if they also sounded similar to the English word. However, this phenomenon cannot be generalized. This was not an outcome to the lesson the teacher-researcher expected. However, the silver lining was that the students became eager to know more Chinese words for the English words they were suggesting.

In order to divert the students' misunderstanding, that most Chinese and English words may sound the same, the lesson needed to change in response to the students' questions. Their comprehension at that point needed to be clarified by introducing the cultural knowledge behind why some words sound the same in both languages.

I stopped them and made use of this good chance to invite them to think about the question, "Why do you think these kinds of similarities existed?", so I said, "Alright, someone just asked a very good question, but do you know why these particular words here sound similar? Does every single Chinese word sound similar to its English one?". "No…!" the students admitted. "Actually it is not a coincidence, you can see that the words like

"Sydney" (pace variation) "Australia" (pace variation) "Ham burger"(pace variation), **Chinese people** (I raised the tone) didn't know about these places and objects long long ago. They are the names of a city or food from **another country** (I raised the tone). Chinese people copied the sounds of these words when knowledge of these places and objects became known in China." The students listened very carefully and sat in silence. "So, now can you understand why Chinese people used these words' pronunciations from English to Chinese in this way?" The students were thoughtful. After some time there was one student who called out, "To make it easier for you to say?" I was really surprised by her quick thinking. "Exactly, correct. You are awesome!" I praised her answer and she was proud of herself, and so were her peers. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 2, Term 4, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

Intercultural understanding as outlined in the data excerpts above definitely aided the children's language learning. In order to explain the reason for this language phenomenon (similar pronunciation), the teacher-researcher questioned the students step by step. Initially "polar questions" (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p.43), to which the expected answer was either 'yes' or 'no', were used to focus the children's thinking in a logical, scaffolded way. *Polar* questions enable the students' thinking maps to be clear and hopefully easier. Then the teacher-researcher could move on to the next level.

When the teacher-researcher was explaining the intercultural knowledge behind the language phenomenon, she used *referential* questioning but included other variations within the questions such as pacing (to leave the time for students to reflect and follow the ideas presented), and raising the tone (to stress some key concepts and call for attention). Variations to voice and pace make the teacher's 'talk' more engaging. At the end of this lesson, the direction of which changed many times in response to the students' understanding, the teacher-researcher posed the final question to probe students' thoughts. The answer from the student supported the teacher-researcher's questioning and confirmed for the class the answer that demonstrated an

understanding of the concept surrounding the few words in Chinese that sound very similar to the same word in English.

5.3 Trans-language practice in an intercultural context

Scaffolding lessons based on the trans-language approach was explored by the teacher-researcher as a possible way to engage students in Chinese language and culture learning.

5.3.1 Trans-language to teach a sentence

Due to the students' limited vocabularies, the teacher-researcher discovered they were basically unable to express their ideas in a whole Chinese sentence. The teacher-researcher explored how to scaffold single words to create sentences and at the same time, try to stimulate their willingness to attempt sentence creation. Choosing a topic of personal interest seemed like a good starting point, as the excerpt below reveals.

> For the revision of the vocabulary related to transportation, I asked the students to use the sentence "Wo xi huan" (I like …, they had already learned this before) to tell me their favorite way to travel around. I gave them an example, "Wo xi huan **Gong jiao che** (the bus), because I could enjoy the scenery when I sit next to the window on the **Gong jiao che**". I stressed **Gong jiao che** to make it clear to hear. The students were then asked to use this sentence framework to replace the final word, with their choice for the method of transportation they liked and to include the reason for their choice. The students were keen to answer and wanted their voices to be heard. Most of them raised their hands eagerly. I recorded some of their sentences.
>
> "Wo xi huan Gongjiaoche (I like the bus), because Gong jiao che was fun."
> "Wo xi huan Huoche (I like the train), because Huo che has comfortable seat."

"Wo xi huan Feiji (I like the plane) because Fei ji was really fast."

They felt like it was fun to express themselves by saying a sentence in both English and Chinese. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 2, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

In this language practice session, the teacher-researcher scaffolded the trans-language approach to help the students express their feelings and opinions in a new context, but based on what had been previously learned. Students showed engagement because it was an opportunity to give their personal view and preference. The teacher-researcher initially provided a framework for the students by giving an example of her choice using a trans-language sentence structure. The students were then able to repeat this structure and express their opinions by using their existing Chinese words supported by the sentence completion in English. This activity incorporated trans-language scaffolding and in this way the students practiced the target language to express their personal preferences. It was a new experience for them where the scaffolding assured their success-the trans-language structure allowed for Chinese vocabulary knowledge to be used in connection with English.

The lesson was successful at this point; interpersonal cultural *interaction* was achieved, however the *Chinese cultural component* appeared to be less so. In order to address this, the teacher-researcher used the trans-language scaffolding in another way as below:

When I introduced students the Chinese methods of transport, I used some pictures of the modern life in China. There was a cultural difference that could be focused on; the bus driver in China sits on the opposite side of the vehicle compared to Australian bus drivers. In other words, the driver in China sits on the left while the Australian driver sits on the right. When I showed the students pictures of Chinese buses, I questioned the students, "In this **Gong jiao che**(Bus), can you spot anything weird or different from what you see in Australia?" I allowed students the time to look carefully at the

picture. The students gave their full attention and stared at the board in silence. After a short while some students identified the difference and felt very excited. They raised their hands eagerly trying to give the answer. I took this opportunity to require them to give their answer by including the target vocuabulary for the lesson "Gongjiaoche". Students were not hesitant and took this challenge. The answer was. "The driver in Chinese **Gong jiao che** sits and drives on the left." This was an excellent answer by one of the students. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journals, Week 3, Term 3, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

In this intercultural context, the teacher-researcher scaffolded the questioning and invited the students to notice something different about the picture of the bus and its driver in China. During this part of the lesson the practice of the target language for the learner was increased as well. When the teacher-researcher gave the introduction, she replaced the English "bus" with "Gong jiao che", enabling the students to continue understanding and following the sentence. The trans-language method assisted the teacher-researcher to engage the students into this lesson. Students also practiced the target language when they explored the intercultural knowledge about Chinese buses and their drivers.

5.3.2 Trans-language for teaching a new word/vocabulary

Based on the teaching and learning examples reported above that incorporated scaffolding and trans-language, the teacher-researcher decided to build on the success of these lessons decided to design additional lessons for the children to learn language in an intercultural context.

When I taught the students the word "班级 (Ban ji: Class)", I didn't provide the meaning directly. Instead I thought to guide them to its meaning by substituting the Chinese word at the point in an English sentence, where they could possibly gauge its meaning for themselves. I began by scaffolding the questions: "So, what is '班级(banji)'? I will say a sentence using '班级

(banji)' and you might be able to guess its meaning." The students all listened up and looked up at me waiting for me to give the sentence. I continued, "AAA, BBB, CCC, they are all the names of '班级(banji)'. Then, what is '班级(banji)'?" Half of the students put their hands up. For them, it was like a fun riddle game so they were eager to answer. They were able to know that "班级 (banji)" meant class because the AAA, BBB, CCC are all the names of the classes in this school. They were familiar with these names. Later on, in order to give them more language input, I started a discussion. "Okay boys and girls, now I have a question here. Can anyone tell me how you name your 班级 (banji) in this school?" Students' hands went up eagerly because they loved to share their school culture with me. They explained that the first letter of the classroom teacher's surname was the letter used to create the 班级 (banji). The next step in selecting the 班级 (banji) was to use this letter and match it with the surname of a famous celebrity (or other category) to come up with a distinctive 班级 (banji). For example, this term the names of all the 班级 (banji) needed to be the names of scientists. If the classroom teacher's surname was "Allen", then the letter "A" would be used to choose a scientist, for example, "Armstrong". Then I asked the students, "So do you know how Chinese people name their 班级?" One student looked at me and said, "Following their classroom teacher's surname's first letter?" Then I asked back, "Oh, really? But do Chinese people use lettters in their names?". "Ohhh……" The student was stunned, went into silence and started to re-think her answer. Then I showed them the way that most Chinese schools named their classes with the real classroom pictures in China. They were very interested and happy to hear about the different school life in China (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 4, Term 4, 2015).

Analysis and reflection

Scaffolding the children's learning has been exemplified in the excerpt above. By substituting the target Chinese word into an English sentence and with questioning the trans-language approach was used so the students could discover the meaning of

the word (班级,banji) themselves. Introducing the trans-language sentence example raised the students' curiosity. Students were attentive throughout the lesson. At the beginning, the teacher-researcher made use of the new target language (班级,banji) in a way that was a mystery to them and they had to participate to uncover the meaning from the clues in the trans-language sentences.

Once the students knew what 班级(banji) meant, the teacher-researcher quickly engaged them in further intercultural knowledge learning by challenging them to consider the school culture in China that the teacher-researcher was familiar with. It also provided the students with reflection time for them to re-think their language and culture, and raise their awareness that other cultures around the world may be different from their own.

5.4 Visualization as a method to scaffold language learning—Chinese characters

5.4.1 The Chinese character for farm-"田"

A mismatch in understanding occurred during one of the lessons the teacher-researcher implemented at the Gardens Public School. This occurrence provided the teacher-researcher with an example of how an explanation of what is 'real' in China (or Chinese culture) may not match with what the students in Australia and at the Gardens Public School hold as 'real' or common sense. The excerpt of this lesson is provided below, when the Chinese character for farm "田" was introduced to the students:

> When I taught the character "田", I explained to the students that "田" meant "farm or field" in Chinese. The reason why we created "田" as the character for farm was because all farms or fields in China were square or rectangular with fenced paddocks across to the border. The classroom was quiet. I sense something was not clear to the students. I decided to check with them by asking "Do you think this character looks like a farm?" "No…" the students answered with confused faces. Then I asked them, "What does it look like to

you?" Most of them agreed that it looked like a "window". Then I realized that I had taken the pictures I had in my mind as necessarily being the same for the students. The fact which I had forgotten was that they weren't familiar with China, or the landscape or countryside there. Most of them, if not all, had never visited China before. On reflection, I decided to find a 'real' picture of a farm in China in order for them to see and understand. I searched online and showed them examples of Chinese farms and fields. The moment the students saw the pictures, they understood what I meant, and said "Oh, now it makes sense!" (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journals, Week 6, Term 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

The teaching 'accident' above was due to the lack of consideration for the students' general knowledge background as Australian school children. The teacher-researcher was trying to guide the students into the picture in her mind which was totally different to the students' experience and understanding. The students had their own perspectives when they looked at the Chinese character for farm or field "田". They would have remained confused and may have had difficulty remembering this character if the teacher-researcher left the character learning with this verbal explanation. Students were able to understand when the teacher-researcher provided a visual cue for the students to see the match between the written shape of the character and the real shape of fields and farms in China. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) suggest that scaffolding might include various ways of representing ideas and concepts, such as the visuals. In this case the pictures provided a link between the character and its meaning. This link, or scaffold, would possibly help most of the students with memorization.

There are many Chinese characters that were created based on the look of the 'real' item or object. In this way Chinese written characters are an ideographic language. However, in modern times there has been some evolution of the Chinese characters, and many now have changed their formats to have no resemblance to their original form. To scaffold the students learning of these Chinese characters, the teacher-

researcher needed to design other ways to help the students visualize the meaning of these Chinese characters.

5.4.2 The Chinese characters for “猫(cat)” and “狗(dog)”

The teacher-researcher decided that the best resource to design relevant visualization for unusual Chinese characters was herself and her personal perspective towards these characters. As a bilingual teacher with a Chinese cultural background the teacher-researcher wanted to make an effort to vividly represent some targeted Chinese character learning to enable the students’ understanding and memorization of them. The excerpt below reports the visualization the teacher-researcher developed to teach “猫(cat)” and “狗(dog)”.

> When I taught students the characters “猫(cat)” and “狗(dog)”, I wrote these on the board and gave the students enough time to look at all the strokes for these two characters. Students whispered when they looked at them. These characters must have appeared very strange in their eyes. I next asked the students to look carefully to identify any common parts within these two characters. The students identified this very quickly. This part was the very important radical “犭” (meaning animal) within each character. In Chinese, the inclusion of a radical, will indicate inclusion into a category. In this instance, the two Chinese characters included the radical part “犭”, which meant that both characters had something to do with the category “animal”. Beforehand the students had been told that “猫” meant “cat” while “狗” meant “dog”. The students sat silently, trying to follow my explanation. I could feel that they were actually confused by these complicated strokes. It was hard for them to connect these “symbols” to their previous language knowledge which is the alphabet language. Then I sketched the contours of the images that had been created in my mind when I looked at these two characters. After the students saw my drawings, their eyes shone and they said they could “See it”, and they were surprised by my work. “That was really a good job,” said one student.

Now with the visualization and the explanation that the radical "犭" looked like the bones of the animals a link had been established and possibly the students would remember this radical more easily. Most of them did remember this radical when I asked them at the end of the class. I also put some traits that could represent "dog (teeth, tail, bones)" and "cat (ears)" on the character to further assist them to remember these two characters. They were stimulated by my idea and wanted to try to incorporate their own drawings around the strokes of the characters for dogs and cats to design their own. After this example they understood how they could design a drawing around a Chinese character to reveal its meaning. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journals, Week 6, Term 1, 2015)

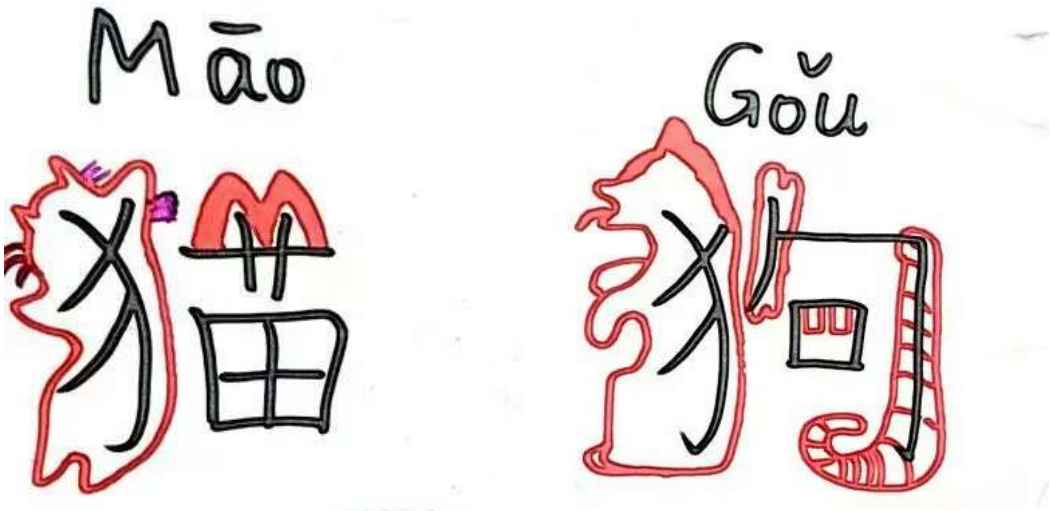

Figure 5.1: Visualizing Chinese characters

Analysis and reflection

In this teaching and learning episode, the teacher-researcher firstly left some time for the students to become familiar with the strokes for these two Chinese characters. It was actually a time for the students to project their personal perspectives onto the characters to see if anything attracted their attention. Once the identification of the radical had occurred the students were again given practice with the radical for 'animal'. The teacher-researcher then demonstrated how drawing images around the Chinese character could help to visualize the meaning of it. An interpersonal interaction occurred when both the learners and the bilingual teacher-researcher exchanged communication and understanding about these characters.

Scaffolding was used by the teacher-researcher as she broke down the parts of the characters, and explained to the students, step by step, the structure of the characters. After the students became familiar with the whole character, the teacher-researcher started to create the visual in her mind of how to make a drawing around the character to indicate its meaning. From the facial expressions and the comments of the students, it could be argued that the students 'accepted' and even 'appreciated' the teacher-researcher's perspective. The meaning of the characters became clear. With the help of this visual association with the Chinese characters, the students noticed the traits of these characters in a more meaningful way and hence, may more easily remember them. The visualizations appeared to impress them and also provided reinforcement of the language fact that the Chinese characters constitute an ideographic language.

However, this is only the first stage of visualizing a Chinese character. In an effort to make the Chinese language learning within a truly intercultural context, the teacher-researcher decided that more cultural information needed to be embedded in the Chinese characters to be taught.

5.4.3 The Chinese character for "彩 (rainbow)"

> When I prepared the lesson to teach the Character "彩 (rainbow)", I firstly wrote the character on a piece of paper and kept looking at it—thinking about what this character represents to me. I had seen this character millions of times since learning how to read Chinese, and only at this time did I realize that this character had already projected an image in my mind every time I had seen it. This time as I looked closely at the character, I tried to record the image it made in my mind with the painting below (Figure 5.2). When next in class I showed the students this picture, leaving some time for them to observe. Obviously the students had noticed the "rainbow" part. But they couldn't recognise exactly what this character meant. Then I explained further: "This character is related to an old Chinese saying, which is used to encourage and build confidence in others (paused at this point). That is, you couldn't see 'it' until you went through a storm (moved my finger and

pointed to the ‘rain’ part). Then what do you think it could mean?” The students listened carefully and started to think. There was one girl who raised her hand quickly and said, “Oh, it’s *rainbow*!” She looked happy and proud that she had the answer correct. Other students kept looking at the painting. They were trying to understand that old saying. (From the teacher-researcher’s reflection journals, Week 5, Term 3, 2015)

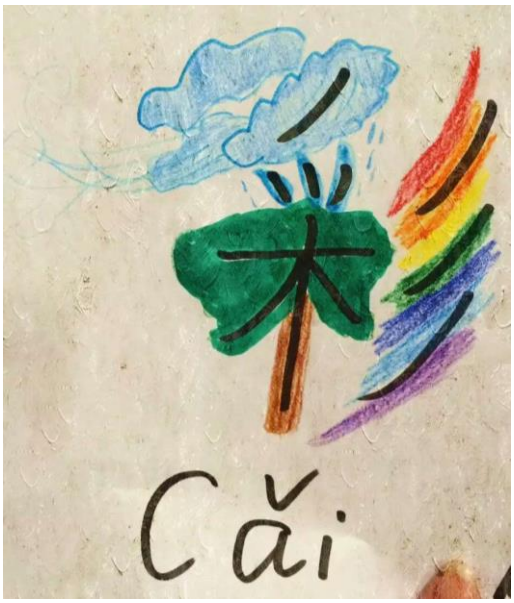

Figure 5.2: Attaching cultural meaning to visualizing the Chinese character

Analysis and reflection

In the excerpt above, the teacher-researcher utilized her personal perspective of the character and what it meant to her. She referred to some cultural meaning when she looked at the character so that when she taught it, the character could speak for itself and would be able to carry as much cultural information as possible. This required the teacher-researcher to create the picture/painting around the strokes of the character and also link this to the cultural knowledge—the old Chinese saying, to generate the inspiration for a visualization to assist the students to learn the character.

There was one thing that the teacher-researcher could have improved upon. This was to continue the lesson by giving the students the opportunity to paint on the Chinese character themselves—to see how their perspectives could be represented. In this way the written structure of the characters would be more personally meaningful and possibly imprint in their minds for longer.

Chinese characters could be an important resource for carrying cultural information. It could be the ‘real’ culture or the ‘made-up’ culture that can be created by the any teacher’s personal perspective and personal culture. For both students and teachers, using scaffolding to describe sections and/or break down the parts of the characters, has been used successfully in these lessons to support the students’ understanding and memorization of Chinese characters .

5.5 Discussion

The main purpose for the scaffolding in this research project was to support and enable the students’ intercultural understanding to be developed by learning the target language. The importance of inter-personal understanding, between the teacher-researcher and the students was paramount. The scaffolding of questions allowed the teacher-researcher and the students to share their experiences and learn about each other’s. It enabled a positive relationship to be established where the students were confident to speak the target words, sentences in the context of learning about Chinese culture from a Chinese native-speaker. Scaffolding the lessons within an intercultural context appeared to engage and inspire the students. In Chinese, there is a similar concept relating to intercultural understanding. That is:

> “推己及人(推：understand,己: self, 及:reaching, 人: others. One should know how to understand themselves first, then one is able to apply this reasoning to understand others)”.

Hence, the intercultural scaffolding in this context is to assist the learners to understand the relationship between language and culture. Through reasoning people grow the capacity to be open and unprejudiced when encountering people outside of their own cultural group. People are individuals first, and then they enter relationships with others. Therefore, scaffolding the intercultural language learning should start from inter-personal interactions. This could be exploring the students’ previous experience and knowledge, inviting them to notice and compare with

another culture, then expanding their knowledge to improve their intercultural competence.

Polat and Metin (2012) has cited some strategies beneficial to intercultural understanding and conflict management (Van der Zee et al. cited in Polat and Metin, 2012). One is the open-mindedness. This assesses people's capacity to be open and unprejudiced when encountering people outside of their own cultural group and who may have different values and norms. People should be enterprising and flexible socially and keep their emotional balance when encountering problems based on cultural differences. This starts with the individual's reasoning ability. Once an individual can reach an understanding, they reach "others". This leads to cultural empathy -- the capacity to identify with the feelings, thoughts and behavior of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, showing interest to others and being susceptible to the emotions of and faith in others (Polat and Metin, 2012).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher used a variety of questioning techniques (display, referential and polar) to scaffold children's learning experiences within an intercultural context. The purpose for learning new cultural knowledge was for the students to compare English with Chinese language and culture, practice the language components and content being introduced and to develop a deeper the capacity to develop their own visualizations to assist with learning Chinese characters.

Overall, providing students with scaffolded questioning in order for them to notice, compare and using trans-language and visualization had successful outcomes as a teaching strategy for young beginning learners at the Gardens Public School.

CHAPTER 6
INTERACTIVE INTERCULTURAL ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

6.0 Introduction

This chapter has addressed the third contributory research question:

> How can Chinese language teaching and learning activities be embedded with intercultural knowledge in order to engage students in Chinese language learning?

The key concept in the exploration of this question was ‘actively engage’ or ‘interactive’, such as the interactions with the target language and culture, with the Chinese teacher, or with the students’ as individuals or with their peers.

The interactive intercultural activities planned, delivered, observed and reflected upon (as proposed in the teacher Xingzhi/AR research design for this study) have been presented in this Chatper under the coded themes of:

- Role-play (speaking and listening practice through real-life and culture-embedded scenarios)
- Games (speaking and writing practice)
- Chinese story telling (listening and speaking) through text-based and audio-flash-based), and

- Arts making

The different activities that were planned covered the different aspects of the target language practices, in line with the language curriculum at Gardens Public School. The interactive intercultural activities needed to include the language elements of listening, speaking, reading and writing (in this instance, Chinese characters hand-writing).

6.1 Role-play as an intercultural activity to practice speaking and listening

Griffiths and Keohane (2000) argue that there needs to be a communicative approach (e.g., role playing) in second language teaching instead of a more traditional grammar-translation method. This is supported by Mehrnoush and Sayadian, (2015, p.217) who suggest, "A strategy to encourage students to explore and use new knowledge of a culture to simulate authentic situations is the use of role plays".

The role play as an interactive activity provided an opportunity for the students at Gardens Public School to practice their oral Chinese speaking and listening. In this intercultural context, the teacher-researcher invited the students to a scenario (real life or culture-embedded), encouraging the students to perform their lines in the scenario. The teacher-researcher then observed the students' performances in terms of their culture awareness and their perspectives.

6.1.1 The role-play with real-life scenarios

The following excerpts from the teacher-researcher's observations and reflection journal provide the representative data for recommending role-plays as a successful activity to engage students in intercultural language learning.

> After I waited for the students to settle down, I called for their attention with a question: "Okay everyone, before I start our class today, let me ask you a question: How would you greet with your friend if you meet them, say in the

street? Can anyone show me how? Make a scenario here please." Most students raised their hands eagerly because they were very keen on expressing themselves. I asked them to come up to the front of the class in pairs. While the students were performing the greeting, I wrote on the board, what they had said as a dialogue in English. This made them more motivated. Other students wanted their words to be recorded on the board as well. Here I recorded some performance from the students:

Some boys role-played the greeting routine with more physical examples: Patting their friends' shoulders slightly, a big hug, a firm hand-grasp, or copying the NBA players, who jump and hit their chests. After the lesson the classroom teacher told me that when the students go to the middle school they are more likely to imitate adult behaviours. Most of the girls did role-plays that were more 'good mannered' but there were some girls who copied what the boys just did. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Term 2 Week 2, 2015)

Sometimes the students tended to be over-dramatic rather than their real selves. But this also reminded me that there could actually be inter-personal differences such as the different behaviors between genders in the classroom. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Term 2 Week 2, 2015

Then I asked another question**: "**Okay, now I see, this is the way you greet with each other. Right? Now, do you know how to greet your friends in Chinese?**" "**No.....," said the students. Some students felt frustrated about it some students were interested by this question and some showed me a "I don't care" face. I thought this was a good time to guide them into a cultural reflection. So I raised my voice and said "In Chinese, the most common way is just the same as you did in English." Then I wrote down the Chinese way of greeting alongside the English. They are:

Q:你好吗？(How are you?)

A:很好/还可以/不好(I am good/Not too bad/I am bad.)

I also discussed with the students that nowadays when Chinese people greet, normally they don't greet with gestures or movements-generally it is just the spoken words. After we practiced how to say these words several times, I asked the students to do the role play again. They were happy to do that. Most of them preferred to say 很好(I am good), though their faces looked more like 'not good'. Someone would challenge themselves to say 还可以(I am okay), some students who wanted to be different said 不好(I am bad) with a strong dramatic emotion. (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Term 2 Week 2, 2015)

It was novel for the students to perform a greeting ritual in another style by saying the language from another country. Most of them looked nervous, not as comfortable and confident as when they performed their greetings in English. This was their first time in a role-play of a real-life scenario in another language. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Term 2 Week 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

Asking questions is a good way to catch students' attention, especially the questions that allow the students to re-think who they are or what they do in their daily life, in other words, it is about their identities. The students' senses of identities were revealed in the scenarios they role-played as it enabled them to individually perform to an audience, in two different languages. Firstly, the language students had to reflect their identity in their mother language because only in their mother language could they be their real/authentic selves.

To ensure the interactivity and engagement, the teacher-researcher allowed the students to express themselves through the role play. The students participated and wanted their voices to be heard and recorded—their motivation increasing once their greetings were recorded on the board. While the students demonstrated to the teacher and their peers, what they do and say when they greet with each other, they were actually mimicking what they had seen from their cultural communities. The language or the body language that students used in their role-play was learned from

others, such as adults, the mass media and so on. The way girls greet with each other was different with the boys'. This is a gender difference. In the role playing, each student had the opportunity to be unique; the interactive activity enabled students to make a connection with their peers and their own cultural background.

To extend the engagement of the students, also in order to invite students to experience a new culture, the teacher-researcher tried to raise their curiosity by challenging them to consider how Chinese people would greet each other. Different students gave different responses to this question. Some appeared happy and interested to know more, however others were indifferent or even unwilling to engage with this issue. This meant that the interactive moment did not continue for all students. Therefore it was timely that the teacher-researcher "intervenes". The teacher-researcher left a space on the whiteboard, next to the students' English greetings, where the Chinese greeting could be displayed.

Actually the modern way for Chinese people to greet each other, has lost the traditional 'cultural' aspect. The cultural messages behind the greeting language (你好吗?很好/还可以/不好) are limited. To reach back to the target culture through this less flexible language was not desirable as students saw it as a language task rather than a real-life cultural activity. When they role-played the Chinese greeting scenario they were not as confident or comfortable as before. In this activity, it seemed that the *interactive connection with the culture* was not strong enough—it was linguistic rather than cultural. If we regard the language here as the carrier of culture, then it could be argued that in this type of activity (role-play with a real-life scenario), the connection between the students and the language was shown by the students expressing their feeling or willingness to participate in the activity.

6.1.2 The role-play in the culture-embedded scenario

Based on the analysis above, which indicated that in the general greeting role-play, the cultural connection for the students was not strong, the teacher-researcher developed a follow up activity to address this loss of connection. The students were invited to experience a new cultural identity, a Chinese character—Monkey King.

After the students finished painting their own Monkey King masks, I asked them to come to the front and sit on the floor to use the masks "to do something"-to take on the persona of the Monkey King in a little role-play. Before they had already learned how to say "Nihao, wo shi… (Hello, I am...)". Therefore I thought to use this activity to ask them to practice this newly learned sentence. Previously I had already introduced them the basic information about Monkey King, one of which was that the Monkey King had the ability to transform himself into 72 other forms of items or characters, such as the tables, chairs in the classroom, the trees and flowers in the playground, or it could be another Mr. XX (their classroom teacher). The students were amazed at that moment. Some of the students opened their mouths and turned to their friends with a surprised face. When I said that Monkey King could transform into chairs and pointed to the chairs in the classroom, there was one boy student sitting there who said, "So now I could be sitting on a Monkey King." I was amazed by his comment. I told the students that since they had the mask of Monkey King, they 'owned' the ability as well, and it was their turn to be transformed by putting their masks on and telling others what they wanted to be. The students all became excited to do that. They put their masks on happily, looking at each other with giggles. Then I asked the question, "What do you want to be if you had the Monkey King's ability?" Students were asked to take part in a role-play with a partner and talk to each other as if they were two Monkey Kings talking to each other. They all wanted to express themselves. I took this opportunity to ask the students to answer me in Chinese, which was the sentence "Wo shi…… (I am ……)". The students were still confident to participate in a role-play. No one put their hands down to indicate they did not want to participate. Each of the pairs as Monkey Kings spoke many attempts as they suggested what they wanted to be, for example, "Wo shi Mermaid". I recorded some students' answers, which included:

"Wo shi Captain America".

"Wo shi Giant".

"Wo shi Monkey Queen", inspired "Wo shi Monkey Princess".

"Wo shi XXX (his best friend's name, when the child said this, both

children looked at each other with big and proud smiles)".

"Wo shi white board".

"Wo shi Elsa". (From the teacher-researcher's observation Week 2, Term 1, 2016)

Analysis and reflection

The Monkey King masks made the role play activity more appealing and interesting. The mask was like a real cultural link, making the interaction more meaningful. Students were eager to put their masks on by themselves. The masks were like a link, a link that carried some target cultural information. The teacher-researcher presented the cultural information before she brought this link out to the students to make sure the cultural "lead-in" would be strong enough. The more information given, the more thoughts could be inspired, especially when the teacher-researcher initially personalized the cultural information by using the examples of the tables, chairs and the classroom teacher which were very close to the students' lived classroom experiences. As a response, there was a boy who called out that he might be sitting on a Monkey King. It was a quick response from the student and evidence of his engagement and how he was personalizing his thoughts about the Monkey King.

This was an interactive intercultural activity whereby the cultural information (the Monkey King's abilities) inspired students to experience something new and allowed them to make their own meanings on it. Meanwhile it was a good opportunity for the teacher-research to encourage the students to practice their speaking and listening in Chinese taking advantage of the students' interest in the role-plays. In this activity, the teacher-researcher asked the students to express themselves in a Chinese sentence, the structure of which was familiar. Therefore they were confident to do that and did it very well. The cultural experience in this activity strengthened the language practice. The culture stimulated the language.

The students at this young age (10-11 years) were still very innocent and fresh-minded. Most of them were eager to try something new. They were willing to tell the teacher-researcher what transformation they could take. The answers given by the students, such as Mermaid, Captain America, Elsa, were all the characters from

American movies which is a very powerful mass media. These characters were the heroes in the students' eyes. Inspired by Monkey King, they drew on their knowledge of their familiar heroes. However some students made a more interactive connection with the cultural component of the lesson. For example, one girl student proposed to be the Monkey Queen—a totally new character created by the student herself. Inspired by this answer, the girl who sat next to her, then said she wanted to be the Monkey Princess. This indicated a kind of 'cultural sparkle' that affected their student peers.

A third theme revealed in the data analysis of the interactive intercultural role-play activity was the response given by a boy who suggested that as Monkey King, he would transform into his best friend. This response indicated a deeper understanding of the transformational ability of the Monkey King. From the way the two boys looked at each other during their role-play, there was a positive *inter-personal interaction* which was enabled through this culturally-embedded role-play scenario. It was good to see the students' friendship could be reinforced in a language classroom. The intercultural connection provided the opportunity for an inter-personal connection between the two boys.

6.2 Games for intercultural language learning

Games are an important activity in language learning (Wright, Betteridge and Buckby, 2006). Normally they would challenge learners to highly focus and use their knowledge to complete a task, often with a competitive edge. The interactive connections could be very strong in the games. Language teachers can use games to help students practice their newly learned language across all aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The challenge for the teacher-researcher was to incorporate the intercultural knowledge into the games to enable the students to practice their language learning in a cultural context.

6.2.1 Games for intercultural language speaking practice

After the students learned the eight basic colors (Hóngsè-red, Huángsè–

yellow, Lánsè–blue, Lǜsè–green, Chéngsè–orange, Zǐsè–purple, Hēisè–black, Báisè–white), I said "Okay, now we are going to play a game." When the students heard the word "game" they all became very excited. Then I continued, "Today we are going to play the game 'Guess who I am' but in a different way. I will present the eight colors on the board and then invite one student to come up here, facing the board, and then I will pick two other students to say the names of two colors. The student at the front will then try to guess who says which color." The students appeared to be interested in this game. Most of them put their hands up asking for a turn. I picked one student to face the board without peeking, asking him to wait for the first voice to say a color name. Then I turned to the rest of the class. They all looked at me in silence, hoping that I would pick them. Then I chose two of them by counting in Chinese "Yi, Er" (they had learned the numbers in Chinese before) and pointed to them as a notice that now they could get ready to speak the color name, out loud, in Chinese. The two students turned to the board, thinking about which color to say. I saw that they tried very hard to pronounce the word clearly and loudly and they looked very excited to see if their peer could recognise their voice. The final step of the game was that after the color names were spoken, (the colors chosen were Hongse and Lanse), the child at the board replied with "XXX said Hongse and XXX said Lanse." Most of the children, who had a turn at the blackboard to guess which peer said the color name, could identify the voice of their peer and were very proud of that. The other students would then say Gōngxǐ Gōngxǐ (Congrats!) to the guesser (with the related Chinese gesture they had learned before). Sometimes the child guessing would be incorrect and the other students would be excited because they regarded it as their victory (they had tricked their friend). (From the teacher-researcher's observation, Week 3, Term 2, 2015)

After several rounds of the game, the students appeared to be getting bored as the game required quite a deal of repetition. I then decided to challenge the students further by inviting more students (three or four students in total) to speak the color names, but also allowing them to 'fake' their voices. With this challenge, students were less able to clearly identify their peer as they

spoke the color's name. The students became more engaged and requested we continue the game. As a result of this game the students practiced the colors in the Chinese language and mastered them very well by the end of the lesson. They enjoyed this game so much that they did not want to stop. It was a very successful game if we only see it as a normal activity, but the cultural element was not clear in this game. Students only practiced the language for the colors with the only cultural element being the congratulatory part, Gōngxǐ Gōngxǐ. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Week 3, Term 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

From the data excerpt above, the advantages of this game in the language learning lesson were clear—the students were highly engaged in the activity. The rules of this game ensured that both the guesser and the student giving the color name paid particular attention to what was said. One child needed to pay attention to listen, whilst another tried hard to speak the color name with the correct pronunciation. Other students then were willing to wait to see who won and to take part by congratulating the winner using the Chinese response "Gōngxǐ Gōngxǐ". In this game there was participation and interaction between the learners. In order to raise the interactive level, the teacher-researcher increased the difficulty, by adding additional children to provide the language input and for the students to camouflage their voices. By observing that the children were losing interest, and acting on this observation, the teacher-researcher changed the rules of the game to improve the children's engagement.

However, although the teacher-researcher designed the cultural part in this game (Congratulate others using the Chinese language), there was no cultural connection with the key language being taught, that is, the eight colors. Gōngxǐ Gōngxǐ was introduced in the lesson as the Chinese traditional way to congratulate others, which was used as a language practice for the winner in the game activity, but not for the vocabulary in the lesson plan. The cultural knowledge related to the target language were lacking.

6.2.1.1 Varying the game to include intercultural knowledge

After reflection, and in order to keep the interaction level of the game as well as provide intercultural interaction, the teacher-researcher designed a variation on the game.

> Today I asked the students to review the 4 newly learned Chinese instructions (hands-up, be quiet, listen up, sit properly) with the game "Simon Says". I picked five students to come up to the front of the classroom and line up in a row. Instructions were then given. If I said "Simon Says 举手 (hands-up)", the students needed to raise their hands in the Chinese way (I had shown them before and they copied that easily) and repeat the instruction, to say 举手. The five students competed with each other. The one who did the gesture wrongly or more slowly than the others would be 'out'. The other students who remained seated would help to check which students remained at the front, and those who were 'out'. After several rounds of the game, I encouraged some outstanding students provide the instructions in Chinese. This activity helped the students to practice the Chinese words with the associated body language. These actions were like a bridge connecting the students with the Chinese vocabulary/language. During the game, the students enjoyed competing, with each demonstrating the body gestures as quickly as possible.
>
> However after some rounds I could see the students were becoming bored. After this observation, I told them I needed one volunteer who could give the instructions if he or she could speak well. The students showed an interest in this challenge. Some of them even stood up and walked to me, asking me if s/he could have a go. The more capable students loved to give the instructions and their peers enjoyed repeating the words and tried to copy the pronunciation. After the game, most of the students could remember the four instructions and the related gestures. They could pronounce the words very well.
>
> It was very helpful for the classroom management to let the students know

> the Chinese instructions. I even saw the classroom teacher writing these instructions down when I was teaching. There was a time when a student was making a silly noise. I called his name and said "安静 (Be quite)" with a serious face. The student stopped and displayed some manners and respect. This situation had never happened before. It worked more successfully than when I said this instruction in English. (From the teacher-researcher reflection journal, Term 4, Week 2, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

In the game "Simon Says" the teacher-researcher allowed the students to practice speaking Chinese words with related Chinese style gestures. They liked the competitiveness of this game and their interactions revealed this. They had to listen very carefully and respond to the teacher's instructions as quickly as possible. Actually the Chinese style gestures appeared to help the students remember the words they needed to say. The link between the gestures and the words provided an additional prompt for their memories. Their pronunciation improved as they continued to practice the words in this interactive game context.

After several rounds of the game, it became clear that the students were losing interest. In order to keep their attention and avoid a behaviour management issue, the teacher-researcher responded to this observation. Other children, as volunteers, were invited to participate further by giving the instructions. The students responded well as they loved to play the teacher's role. This change to the game format successfully had the students' attention back and strengthened the interaction between the students and their peers. The volunteering students gave the instructions in Chinese to their peers who responded back with both gestures and Chinese words. Including the gestures in connection with the four instructions was different from the 'normal' game. It linked the action with the language practice in what the teacher-researcher thought of as a 'trans-body' language connection for them and provided a new point of interest.

A final observation was that the students appeared to have acquired the four instructions at the completion of the game. Students' language learning was

reinforced through the actions and the repetition of the rounds of the game. The new language acquisition provided an opportunity for the teacher-researcher to improve behavior management by using the Chinese instructions to curb some inappropriate behavior by one student. By responding positively to the request to "安静 (Be quite)" the student displayed that he had practiced, reinforced and then accepted this new language with the related classroom cultural messages that resulted in his changed behaviour.

6.2.2 Games for the intercultural language writing practice

The games discussed above mostly have focused on the practice of speaking and listening in the Chinese lessons, however games can also provide opportunities for hand-writing.

> The game for today was "Spot the Chinese Family Name". I showed the students a picture of the Top 100 Chinese family names (Figure 6.1 below). The students already learned that many Chinese people shared the same family name which normally had one Chinese Character and one syllable. Secondly they had also been introduced to the cultural aspect that there were many commonly used family names in China, shared by many people.

Figure 6.1: Picture displaying the top 100 Chinese family names

After I showed them this picture, I told the students that the game we were

going to play was to see who could correctly spot the Chinese family name I wrote on the board fastest. The students were interested and sat quietly waiting for the first name to be given. I picked 陆(No.70) and started to write it on the board. The students were attentive as I held the marker and commenced to write this surname stroke by stroke. The whole classroom was very quiet. I could feel that many eyes were focused on me. It was also a good opportunity for the students to view the right stroke order of the Chinese characters. Before I finished my last stroke, there were already some students who had found the answer and had raised their hands. I asked one of them to come up to the front to locate/spot it and show the other students. After he indicated where the name was located, I asked other students if they agreed with him. I also asked them to notice the little number beside the surname. I asked the students, "陆 has the number 70, What does this number mean?" They answered but not in a confident way, "It means it is the top 70 popular surname?" Then I said "Yes, it means this family name has the 70th biggest population in China." We continued playing like this for several rounds. Most of the students could spot the correct surname character the first time but some students were confused and were 'fooled' by the similarities amongst some surnames, such as 卢(No.42) and 方(No.52). Overall the game appeared to be successfully engaging the students to carefully look and match the Chinese characters.

After several more rounds of the game, it was apparent that some students were becoming bored. Some were no longer looking at the board and others began talking. I decided to change the game in order to motivate them again. I asked one student to write the surname on the board this time. I told them, "okay everyone, now it is your turn to try the writing. I am going to pick an easy one for you to start with. I would like you to write down the characters on the board and ask others to spot it within the picture. Just use your own way to draw it. No pressure." Many students then raised their hands up cheerfully. I picked 叶(No.49) for them first, and picked one student to come up to write on the board. He wrote it very quickly just like writing the English alphabet. I memorized his stroke orders, then I repeated his order on

the board and said, “This is your way right? Okay, now I am going to show how I write it. And that’s the way Chinese people do, but your strokes are good enough!” I then showed the students the correct way to write that character. Students looked at the board and felt amazed that I could write that fast and neat. One student asked, “Miss, how could you write that fast?” At that moment the classroom teacher replied for me, “Because they practice this every day in China just like you practice your English hand-writing. It is the same.” The students listened carefully at that moment. After the game many students still wanted to have a try. They loved this game, but we didn’t have enough time to continue. I realized that even they didn’t have enough chances to practice the Chinese character writing, but they did a very good job. Some of them wrote as well as Chinese students. (From the teacher researcher‘s observation and reflection journal, Term 3, Week 5, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

As evidenced from the reflection journal excerpt above, before the students could engage with this game, they needed to be informed with enough background cultural knowledge—the knowledge about Chinese surnames to make sense of the rules for the game. The students became highly engaged with the game as generally games interest the children and they are active in their learning (Wright, Betteridge and Buckby, 2006). To play the game successfully, the students need to focus their *attention in order to be competent*. The teacher-researcher took advantage of this to invite students to have an interactive experience with the target language exercise (hand-writing) and the culture (Chinese surnames). The students were highly attentive during the writing of the Chinese name on the board as this commenced the game. All the students were ready to spot the surname as quickly as possible and win the game. After the students located the Chinese character, the teacher-researcher asked them to recall the cultural knowledge it related to—that the number located near the Chinese surname meant the place of this surname in the population of China. For the first example given to the students, “The 70^{th} biggest population” was the cultural fact about the surname that needed to be spotted in the picture.

Reflecting on the journal excerpt above, there appeared to be several key points for improving this game, subsequent lesson plans and teaching practice. To summarize, the teacher-researcher would complete the teacher Xingzhi/AR cycle by attempting to improve the next round of teaching and learning by:

- introducing famous celebrities whose surnames are the same as the one being spotted in the picture. The more popular the surname, the more examples of celebrities could be given. This would create a *stronger reinforcement* for the cultural knowledge,
- monitoring when students appear to become bored with the game as it was first introduced, when the interactive connection is lost, quickly change the game, by including more students as volunteers, allowing the students to take on the role of the teacher, and draw children's attention back to explain the new rules,
- allowing the students to make approximations when writing Chinese characters. For example, "Just use your own way to draw it. No pressure", and
- planning time in the lessons for practice. The students did not appear to have enough time to practice writing the Chinese characters in the 'normal' lesson plan. Additional practice time would need to be included.

Overall, embedding interactive intercultural games provided a successful approach to support their language learning. Students' performance in the intercultural games appeared to reflect their perspective and their knowledge of their language learning.

6.3 Chinese story-telling for intercultural language learning

Story-telling to enhance literacy amongst young learners has a long history and many advocates (Fredericks, 1997; Morgan 2011). Morgan (2011) advises that story-telling also has a place in the languages classroom as a successful means of engaging children with the activities designed to support their learning of a target language. The following two sections report on the interactive, intercultural activities designed by the teacher-researcher using story-telling.

6.3.1 Text-based story-telling for the intercultural language learning

For stressing the cultural concepts of the Ying-yang, telling the story "塞翁失马焉知非福（Misfortune may be an actual blessing）" to the students was the planned intercultural language learning. The key concept/the moral of the story was "things are able to change—good things might turn into bad things, and vice versa."

The teacher-researcher located the English version script and the associated pictures preparing a PowerPoint to retell this text-based Chinese story. An example of one of the slides with the picture and text appears as Figure 6.2 below.

A few months later, the lost **Mǎ** came back with another strong **Mǎ** from the north.

Everyone came to congratulate Sàiwēng, saying it was so lucky that he could get the **Mǎ** back and that now there was another good one**.** But the old man was not that pleased. He didn't take it as a good sign. He just kept the two **Mǎ** back in the yard in case they ran away again.

Figure 6.2: Powerpoint slide to illustrate the text-based story telling activity

The following excerpts from the teacher-researcher's reflection journal Week 3,Term 1, 2015 has outlined the teaching and learning episode in detail.

> In the text and Powerpoint I replaced the English word for "horse" with the Chinese pinyin "Ma" in order to encourage the students to practice saying this new vocabulary. I invited different students as volunteers to read out the story text for the whole class. The students were all quiet as they listened to this story being read and watching the pictures. The volunteers who read the script did a good job. I did observe them pausing a short while when they tried to pronounce the "Ma" in between the English words. Initially they were hesitant but after some time they became familiar with this trans-

language activity. They persisted with the reading as they wanted to know what would happen next. When it came to the last part of the story, which was that the son didn't join in the war due to his broken leg, there was one boy student in the front who called out, "That's life." I was shocked by this Year 6 boy's response. Although he didn't know the philosophy of Ying-Yang, but the common sense behind this story was understandable. After the volunteer finished, we had a discussion about their understanding of this story. To this end, I asked the students the following questions:

1. What do you think of the father in this story?
2. What lessons did you learn from this story?

For the first question, I expected that the students would say the father was a wise man because he could always predict the future. But students didn't have much of an idea about the father. They were quiet and appeared to struggle to think of some ideas. There was one student who said he thought the father was cold-blooded because he didn't feel sad when his son broke his leg. This answer surprised me. I realized that in the script there was no description of the father's personal feelings and I had previously never thought about this. My focus had always been on the key message of the story and this was what I tried to guide the students to notice. The student's perspective was more on the personal feelings.

For the second question, students gave me the following answers:
"It was no good to invade other people's country."
"Never try to ride the wild horse."
"We should stop the war."

Most students repeated a similar sentiment that "we need peace but not the war", and when they said something like that, the classroom teacher would intervene and praise this type of answer. This appeared to be where the classroom teacher had value for this lesson.

At the completion of the activity there was one student who pointed out that

they only had practiced “Ma” and no other Chinese words in this story. This was true. I also realized this problem in this activity. This was my first try to replace the English words with Chinese words in story-telling. I didn’t want to put all the words they had learned into it being conscious that it might confuse and frustrate them.

The main focus in my planning of this activity was with the story itself. I planned to convey some cultural values through this story. However, it turned out that the value that I expected to convey was too complicated for the learners in this age. They had their own perspectives which enlightened me. It was good to know their thinking, in order that I could prepare the next lesson to better suit their knowledge. In addition the balance between the words practice and the story-telling was not easy to keep since these learners were just beginners, their vocabulary was very limited. On the other hand if I wanted to put all the vocabulary they had learned into the story, I would most likely have to make up a story to suit the language practice and in that instance, reject introducing some classic stories from China (From the teacher-researcher’s reflection journal, Week 3,Term 1, 2015).

Analysis and reflection

The assumed value in this Chinese story was that “things could always change; good things could turn into bad things and vice versa.” This was the meaning the teacher-researcher planned to convey to the students. By observing and reflecting on the students’ responses, it became clear that the students’ cognitive level had not been taken into account. At the age of 10, even students in China, might not be able to comprehend the deep meaning of this story as it was written and retold by adults. They might have their own perspectives as well. In this western Sydney primary school context, students focused more on the detailed parts of this story, especially the parts that had the connection with their personal feelings or their previous values gained from their local cultural community.

The students were unable to see the overall intention of this story as it was read to them. In addition the teacher-researcher did not intentionally guide the students to

this conclusion assuming they would "think the same as her". Within the Chinese educational culture the teacher would normally guide the students to learn the same core values as their own. In this instance, the teacher-researcher actually left the discussion open. She did not 'force' the students to think about the story 'her way' but rather questioned the students to the gain their opinions. This was a dilemma for the teacher-researcher, because as a result the aims of the lesson may not be met. However, using this approach of questioning the students for their opinions, meant that their perspectives could be seen.

Beyond the story itself, the teacher-researcher also planned to use this cultural context for language practice of the targeted vocabulary (i.e. replacing the English word "horse" with the Chinese one "Ma")—a trans-language practice. It might have been expected that this approach would create a pronunciation challenge for the students as they were not familiar with speaking two different languages in the one sentence. By the conclusion of the story they had become familiar with "Ma" due to the repetition. However, there seemed to be a gap between the language focus and the cultural focus in this activity. The language focus was on the oral speaking of "Ma", but the cultural focus was on a philosophical value which did not have a close connection with "Ma". Even the teaching of the value component of the story, planned as an outcome of this lesson, was not successful. According to the students' answers in the discussion, it could be said that modern children have their own mainstream values possibly due to their home, local and/or school culture. Their first interpretation to what they could "see" in the story was to draw on their previous knowledge and/or values. The teacher-researcher provided a context for them to express their values but this did not necessarily equate to considering the values of others. They did not 'learn' something new but rather 'projecte' something old.

The balance between culture and language

Upon reflection, this lesson did not achieve the balance between the culture and language as intended in the lesson as the teacher-researcher focused more on the cultural context of this story, explaining the background and the cultural message more than concentrating on the language elements. Liddicoat (2005) (cited in Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 22) suggests a teaching method which addresses this issue by

categorizing the presented culture in four dimensions, which are “artefacts and institutions”, “facts”, “process” and “practice”. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) state further that the most static way of teaching cultural knowledge would be lessons focused on “artefacts and institutions”, and “facts” relating to the cultural knowledge. Whereas to consider culture as a “process” and “practice” could make the teaching and learning more dynamic. Sometimes the cultural content itself is static but the teaching pedagogy could be dynamic (e.g. as in activities where learners engaged with cultural artefacts in a hands on way). The most dynamic approach to culture is represented as a “practice”, where learners “actively engage with the practices of a cultural group (p. 20)”.

Linking this literature to the context of this activity, the language “Ma” and the value of the Ying-Yang could be seen as the factual cultural knowledge, where the script reading was a relatively static activity. The ‘balance’ became lost as the dominance in the lesson became the explanation of the cultural context of the story. In considering how to address the matter of this balance, Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) provide a stance that firstly we should consider how language as a code and language as social practice could get balanced in the curriculum. Language learners need to improve their knowledge and understanding of the code and also be able to see the language as a way of communicating between people. In this activity context, the language as a code “Ma” had no connection to the cultural context—Ying-Yang story.

Bearing in mind these reflections (the fourth step in the teacher Xingzhi/AR cycle) the teacher-researcher would plan the subsequent lesson (returning to step one in the next Xingzhi/AR cycle) to focus more on the language itself and then expand into a broader but related cultural context, such as the expressions about “Ma” in Chinese daily communications (e.g. Ma Dao Cheng Gong, a Chinese idiom which people use to wish others success). This would result in the implementation of more meaningful lessons for these young learners where the language and culture are more closely linked.

Summary

By recording the observations of the students' responses, and analysing the teacher-researcher's reflections on the lesson, improvements to subsequent lessons will be made as an awareness of the following contributed to the teacher-researcher's professional development:

- Consider the age of students and do not assume their cognitive abilities are beyond their years,
- Allow students to think in their own way-not as the teacher-researcher thinks,
- Use questioning to seek students opinions, and
- Balance and integrate the cultural context and the language elements of the lesson for a more dynamic approach.

6.3.2 Audio-visual-based Chinese story telling for intercultural language learning

In the next round of teaching and learning, the teacher-researcher introduced the use of video to tell the story in an attempt to engage the students more interactively.

> After the students learned how to say "笔 (pen)" in Chinese, I decided to tell them a classic Chinese story<神笔马良> (Maliang and His Magical Pen. This time I planned to change the story-telling method, not through the written script, but by using a video—allowing the video to tell the story. However, the video I found on Youtube was situated in an historical setting, as an authentic Chinese style story. This Youtube featured the Chinese language, the costumes and hair styles at a previous time in China. I thought what was featured in this video would be strange and unfamiliar to the students. At the same time, it provided a good opportunity to introduce some traditional culture that was revealed in the video (such as the hat style of a Chinese officer at that time). When viewing the video with the students I decided to pause at critical points and explain the background to some of the images on the Youtube story. The students enjoyed hearing these explanations as it was very new knowledge to them. The most significant problem was the language. The story was told in a standard Mandarin accent,

which meant I had to interpret simultaneously for the students in order for them to understand the story. However, I left the 笔(pen) still in Chinese since the students had already learned it, could understand and this was one of the aims of the lesson, to practice this vocabulary.

During the viewing of the Youtube, there was a situation where I was not able to fully convey and explain all the details to the students if I wanted to deliver the story continuously. Sometimes the students indicated they were confused about the gender (some students called out to ask if a character was a boy or a girl) or identity of the characters in the video due to their costume and hair style. At these points I needed to pause the video and explain. With my translation and audio-visual presentation, students were able to understand the storyline as a whole. The students were engaged in the lesson motivated by the audio, pictures and the plot. Most of the students kept staring at the screen, listening carefully, especially during my translation. I observed from their faces that they were comparing what they assumed was happening within the story with what I actually told them. When it came to the important part, as the volume of the story teller's voice became raised when repeating "Kuai, kuai, kuai (hurry up, hurry up, hurry up!)", the students were keen to imitate and repeated the words with the same emotion, although they didn't really know what did "kuai" mean at that point in the story. It was interesting that they could feel the tone and understood the emotion as the words were spoken and were compelled to join in. During the story, sometimes some students would exclaim or make some private comments on some plots. For example, when they heard that the boy in the story was too poor to afford a pen, they felt shocked and said it was "unbelievable". The shape of the gold shown in the video (which was traditional gold in China) appeared weird to them. They said it looked like a yellow pillow.

The classroom teacher was also engaged at this point. She told the students, "It is interesting that you can guess what was happening by the flash and the tone even if you don't understand their language." After the video finished, the classroom teacher stood up and presented a conclusion for me to the

class. She stated: “So actually we can learn many things from the stories of other countries. What kind of message can you get from this story?” Many students raised their hands to share their ideas. Some of the responses were:

> “We should help the people in need.”
> “Never be too greedy.”
> “One should never give up his dreams.”

The classroom teacher praised the children for these answers as did I. Although the story was from China, the attitudes and values inherent in it were common and could be shared by people from different cultures.
(From the teacher-researcher’s reflection journal, Week 4, Term 1, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

The data excerpt above is a representative example of the implementation of the second method of story-telling—an audio-visual-based interactive intercultural activity. In this instance the approach provided a more dramatic presentation with video/audio to reveal the story rather than the static presentation of pictures and words in the text-based story telling activity outlined in 6.3.1.

On reflection, although the audio-visual was an inspiring format for the students, the ‘problem’ with this presentation of the story was that it was told fully in Mandarin. Therefore the teacher-researcher had to translate the story into English, one sentence by one sentence as the story unfolded on the Youtube. The positive was that it was an opportunity to engage the students in a Chinese language immersion activity. With this exposure to the target language being spoken by a native speaker, many sparkles and possibilities could be identified. For example, some students were very sensitive to the strong emotions carried through the language. With the plot they were able to understand the feelings expressed through the language, especially some easy and repeated words with a stress tone such as “Kuai kuai kuai (hurry up)!” They picked up on the empathy even if they did not understand the meaning of the words being spoken. Students were able to acquire some simple words intuitively when they were affected by the emotions conveyed through those key and/or repeated

words. During this story telling activity, occasionally the teacher-researcher needed to pause the Youtube in order to explain some culturally-embedded details which were relevant to the story. For example, the boys in China at that time kept their hair long and tied up, as did the girls. This hair style for boys seemed weird in the eyes of the modern Australian children. They were confused about his gender. At that moment their attention was focused on the cultural difference rather than comprehending the storyline. It was therefore reasonable for the teacher-researcher to explain that particular element of 'cultural shock' referred to by Shioshvilil, (2012, p.5) as that which relates to a contrast to one's identity. Although the Youtube was 'interrupted' as the story was paused, the students appeared to enjoy hearing the cultural knowledge in the explanations given by the teacher-researcher. As a whole, the audio-visual story-telling activity engaged the students more than the text-based activity in part due to the sounds and animated graphics.

A further observation was that the classroom teacher (who remained in the classroom whenever the teacher-researcher taught the Chinese language lessons) was also engaged in this audio-visual intercultural activity. To some extent the classroom teacher stood as the 'authority' figure within the classroom and the comments added to the lesson by the classroom teacher had the effect of confirming the success and significance of the activity as an intercultural language learning activity.

Reflecting on the answers the students volunteered to the question "What kind of message did you get from this story?", it could be argued that the values in this story were easier for the students to understand compared to the philosophical concepts in the previous text-based story. This may have been because the messages/values in this story were more common to basic humanity that could be shared by people from different cultural backgrounds.

The reflections of the teacher-researcher on this audio-visual interactive, intercultural activity connect with Gregersen-Hermans and Pusch (2012, p.23) who suggest that the development of cross-cultural competence for students can be assisted by learning experiences based on positive intercultural activities.

6.4 Arts-making for intercultural language learning

Arts-making activities are generally more popular with and engaging for students at every level of schooling. In addition “Making art has been found to have a range of personal, social and developmental benefits for children” (Laird, 2012, p.48). During arts-making activities students would be encouraged to create something that presented their understanding, perspective and/or imagination. It was therefore decided that as an interactive, intercultural language activity, art-making as the approach would be a useful vehicle for the teaching and learning of the planned Chinese language.

6.4.1 Drawing as an activity for intercultural language learning

The following excerpt from the teacher-researcher’s reflection journal documented the art-making activity as an intercultural language learning experience.

> After the students learned the basic concept of Yin-Yang (two natural complementary and contradictory forces in the universe in a state of constant flux and balance) and saw some vivid and creative designs of the Yin-Yang, I asked them to design ‘their own Yin-Yang emblems’ on the paper. Their own Yin-Yang emblem meant they could fill in the Yin-Yang ‘logo’ with any words or pictures based on their understanding of Yin-Yang. When the students heard the words “Your own”, they became excited and couldn’t wait to commence their designs. I told the students to draw a normal Yin-Yang on the paper first, then to record the words “Yin-Yang” or “Tai-Ji (the alternative name of Yin-Yang)” at the top of their emblem. I encouraged them to create their own designs. Figure 6.3 below has recorded the examples of work by two students.

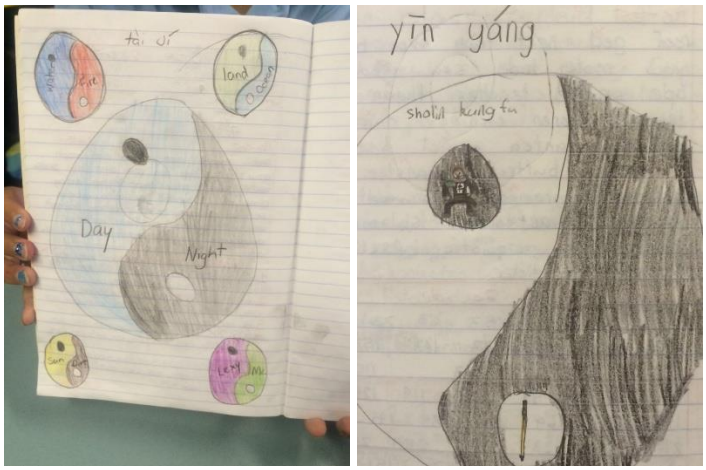

Figure 6.3: Arts-making for intercultural language learning-student work samples

> Looking at these two examples, the one on the left example showed the opposite or contradictory words in each half. "Water-Fire", "Land-Ocean", "Day-Night", "Sun-Dirt", and "Lexy [the students' best friend]-Me". These were all very good concepts that fully illustrated the Yin-Yang meaning. However, the example on the right shows the work of another student who drew the Monkey-King warrior (I asked the student and he told me this figure was from the Chinese Kung-Fu Movie) and his weapon (a stick) in the spot with the title "Shaolin Kung Fu (Chinese martial arts)." At this point I thought this could have been a good chance for the students to write some Chinese words instead of English words on their drawings. The limitation was that their Chinese words were very limited and not much could be related to this cultural context. Even so, I thought this was a successful activity that allowed the students to make their own meaning on the target culture as they practiced the newly learned word "Yin-Yang". Again I noted that "Yin-Yang" was just the spelling alphabet not the Chinese characters. Therefore I thought next time the art-making activity should include the Chinese character writing. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Term 1 Week 6, 2015)

Analysis and reflection

In this activity, the teacher-researcher used the knowledge of Yin-Yang to engage students and further used some creative Yin-Yang pictures to inspire and impress them. This approach was implemented to allow a 'hands on' interactive connection

with this element of the target culture. This interactive connection commenced with the invitation to the students. When the teacher-researcher invited students to design their own Yin-Yang, students were very excited and interested. That meant the learners were willing to take the idea of Yin-Yang and create their own examples of opposites for objects, emotions, and actions. The activity became a platform for them use the concept of Yin-Yang within their own culture and understanding.

In their art-making, students practiced writing the target language ("Yin-Yang") when they replicated the Yin-Yang design on their paper. Observing the children's work samples most displayed that they had a good understanding of Yin. They used their own knowledge or their own perspectives gained from their previous education and personal experiences to give the Yin-Yang their own meaning. In Figure 6.3, the student displayed a very good understanding of antonyms, which reflected an understanding of the concept of Yin-Yang. The only improvement could have been if these antonyms were written in Chinese. The opportunity for practicing additional Chinese words was not provided by the teacher-researcher. In contrast, the second work example in Figure 6.3 demonstrated that the student misunderstood the concept of Yin-Yang, or preferred to link his art-making to Chinese popular culture.

To improve this activity, it would be better that the teacher could teach some Chinese characters before the drawing activity so that students could practice the Chinese writing instead of only using English.

6.4.2 Paper-cutting as an activity for language learning

Based on the teacher-researcher's reflections to the language lesson which implemented drawing as an activity, the ideas for improving teaching practice were incorporated into the next arts-making activity—paper-cutting.

> After the students learned the traditional Chinese cultural meaning of "鱼 (fish)" and the expression "年年有余 (which means "Wish you have more than you want each year"), I also showed them some pictures of the art-works based on this cultural fish, such as the fish 'paper-cutting' in China,

the New Year fish paintings, and the fish charms. The students seemed amazed by the design. The students indicated that previously they hadn't seen the use of a piece of paper to create such a design. I then explained to the students that it was time for them to make their own fish designs using the method of the paper-cutting. Students were very excited about this. All they needed were the scissors, a piece of red paper and a pencil. During the activity, I asked the students to follow my demonstration, one step at a time through the processes of: folding the paper, drawing the lines on the paper, and when and how to cut the shape out. The students listened very carefully. Between each step, I had to pause for a while to check and make sure every student was keeping up with the steps.

The paper-cutting was quite a new activity for most of the students in the classroom. Some of them had no idea about how to fold the paper or from which angle to draw the lines. I had to explain the instructions in a very detailed manner. When the students finished all the cutting work, I told them to open the paper and the magic moment was revealed. They felt amazed when they opened the folded paper and saw a whole fish in front of them (see example Figure 6.4). Then I asked them to write down the previously learned Chinese character "鱼 fish", on their paper with the English translation of the cultural meaning of the fish ("Wish you have more than you want each year"). When the students were doing their work, I went to them to see how they were going. I checked their work and gave them help where needed. When I was correcting them, I would say "Your 鱼 should be like this…", "Your 鱼 is very cute" to impress them with Chinese speaking. Some students finished faster than others. In this case I would challenge them to pronounce "鱼" to me and double checked if they remembered the cultural meaning. Some students were eager to show me their work. There was one boy holding his fish and ran to me, "Miss, are you proud of my fish?"

I explained further to the students that they could also use this paper fish as a wishing card to their family members. Many students asked for more paper,

even after the lesson, as they wanted to create another fish paper-cutting for their siblings or parents. (From the teacher-researcher's reflection journal, Term 2, Week 6, 2016)

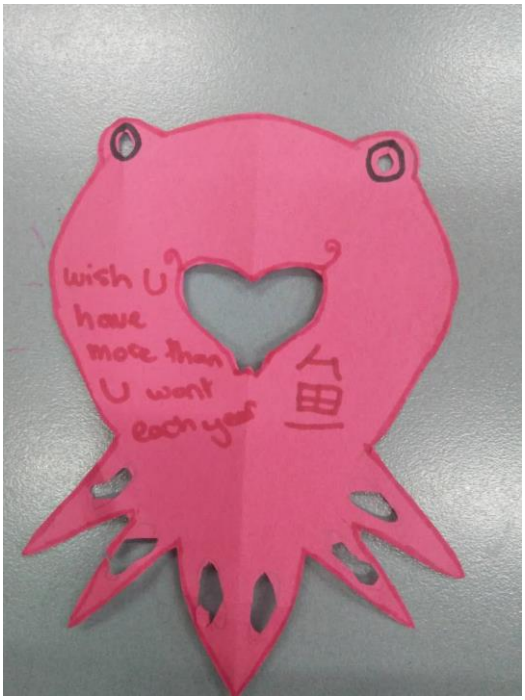

Figure 6.4: Fish paper-cutting example-Year 5/6 student.

Analysis and reflection

To make the interactive connection with the target culture, it is always essential that the teacher-researcher teach the information and knowledge from the target culture before the students are invited into the activity, as indicated in the discussion in Chapter 3.3, the EESR framework (Conway, Richards, Harvey and Roskvist, 2011, p.34). In order to let the students become familiar with paper-cutting—the new art format, the students needed to be exposed to the background of this art technique; what it was and how it was created. After this, the teacher-researcher could invite the students to attempt this Chinese craft. It was an opportunity for the students to enjoy an interactive intercultural experience and at the same time, practice the new vocabulary previously taught. The students were highly motivated because they were amazed and impressed by this new art-making technique from Chinese traditional culture. The new cultural activity opened up new opportunities for them to explore.

This art-making activity provided a positive interactive connection between the teacher-researcher and the students. The clear instructions from the teacher-researcher and the step by step demonstration enabled all the students to participate successfully. As the paper-cutting activity continued the students conversed with the teacher-researcher which enabled a friendly tone to their relationship developing throughout this activity. In other words, the teacher-researcher was actively communicating with the students for a clear purpose—for the students to confidently complete the process of the fish paper-cutting. This craft-making activity was quite new to the students and the degree of difficulty was under-estimated by the teacher-researcher. However, the teacher-researcher adjusted the pace of the lesson to enable all the students to successfully complete the steps in the paper-cutting activity. Anderson, Everston and Brophy (2010, p.25) contend pacing during a teaching and learning experience is very important in terms of the objectives to be achieved and that "pacing may influence instructional decisions".

A further positive outcome was that the teacher-researcher began to observe and learn more about the students, including their perspectives and ability levels.

6.5 Discussion

According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), the nature of the interactions in language teaching within an intercultural perspective includes three key concepts: *Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Interlinguistic and intercultural*. Respectively, interpersonal is referred to as the communication among people who could be performers and audience at the same time. Intrapersonal denotes that the leaners have an inner dialogue with self, while interlinguistic and intercultural emphasizes the movement between two or more linguistic and cultural systems.

The interactions observed during the language learning experiences provided to the students in Gardens Public School involved all three types specified by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013). The language learning classes were, in essence, the intercultural context which brought the classroom teacher, the teacher-researcher and the students together to communicate and interact, through which their understanding of the

Chinese language, their identity and others were developed. Each participant had his or her own individual experience of the interactions through the 'interactive, intercultural activities' provided in the language learning classroom.

Teaching and learning languages within an intercultural perspective requires the planning and implementation of activities that generate successful interactions between all the participants and the language to be learned. This involves the interpretation, creation, and exchange of meaning, and to acknowledge that for learners these interactions constitute a lived experience.

Research conducted that has investigated the success or otherwise of intercultural interactive tasks for students learning Chinese in English speaking countries is sparse. However, Gould-Drakeley (cited in Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013) provide an example of intercultural language learning where the target language was Indonesian and the students were native English speakers. The language learning lessons spanned activities and interactions for 'listening and responding and 'reading and writing'. The teacher participant in this research used Indonesian texts and included intercultural contexts such as "How being polite in Indonesian is not necessarily the same in English." Customs such as accepting or declining invitations were incorporated into language teaching and learning as was engaging the students to reflect on elements of the language itself and cross-cultural similarities and differences.

In the physical learning activity area, Kim et al (2013) pointed out that social psychologists have suggested that direct and positive cross-cultural contact and interactions between members having different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are an important determinant for improving intergroup relations and reducing negative stereotypes and prejudice. The study focus in the Taekwondo experience in USA, stating two themes : (a) cultural knowledge and (b) personal growth in cross-cultural contacts. This study also provided evidence of the role of recreation activities in positive cross-cultural contacts and interactions. Booth (2000) also reported the positive influences of physical activity that crosses cultural boundaries.

In the language learning area, it comes to the communication. Johnson (2000) proposed that communication is an interaction of individuals or social groups consisting in face-to-face communication satisfying the needs of the person in contact with other people by activity, skills, abilities, experience, information. This research also contends the importance of communication and building on classroom language learning activities.

These interactive activities align with several of the activities implemented by the teacher-researcher in this research.

6.6 Conclusion

The activities designed above fit more for the young beginning learners but not the advanced students. Therefore the interaction focus less on the cultural-reflection texts but on the experience of the children get touch with the new culture and react to them.

From the teacher-researcher's observations and reflections through the many teacher Xingzhi/AR cycles, improvements for subsequent teaching and learning cycles have been proposed throughout the discussions in this chapter.

Overall, the teacher-researcher found that games embedded with an intercultural perspective served the most successful means of engaging the students in Chinese language learning. The high interaction games create for the students, along with the opportunities that games provide for teaching and learning all aspects of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing), gave the teacher-researcher evidence to support games as a very successful activity for engaging students successfully. While story-telling tended to focus more on the discussions around culture than Chinese language learning, this activity would be recommended for Chinese language reading and listening if the students had more Chinese language vocabulary. The role-playing activities were successful when the teaching focus was on listening and speaking while the art-making activities in this research were more successful when students practiced the writing of Chinese characters. All of these activities were best designed

when embedded with intercultural knowledge that reflected the age and abilities of the students involved.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This thesis has reported the research undertaken by a bilingual Chinese native speaking teacher-researcher who was studying for a Master of Education degree at the University of Western Sydney while at the same time volunteering as a Chinese language teacher in a local western Sydney public school.

The teaching assignment that provided the context for this research was at the Gardens Public School with two grades of Year 5/6 students (aged 10 and 11). The teacher-researcher used teacher Xingzhi/Action Research (AR) as the methodology to conduct the research. Cycles of the Xingzhi/AR were conducted through the four stages of 1) Lesson planning, 2) Taking action—delivering the lesson, 3) Observation—of the students' performance, and 4) Reflection, and on the basis of the analysis and reflection on the data, improvements to subsequent lessons were suggested and the next cycle of the Xingzhi/AR methodology commenced.

Over an eighteen month period, and following the research design and principles as outlined in Chapter 3, (Sections 3.3 and 3.4) the teacher-researcher explored the research question:

> How can a teacher-researcher, implementing *teacher Xingzhi/action research*, design Chinese lessons through embedding intercultural knowledge to support students' understanding and learning of Chinese

language and culture?

Three contributory research questions were developed in order to further focus the research—the data to be collected and analyzed. These were:

1. What teaching content (Key learning words /Cultural topics) would positively support the students' learning of Chinese language and culture?
2. What scaffolding strategies could be implemented by the teacher-researcher to support the students' intercultural language learning and thinking?
3. How can Chinese language teaching and learning activities be embedded with intercultural knowledge in order to engage students in Chinese language learning?

7.1 Overview of the findings

Each of the contributory research questions has been explored and the findings reported in a separate chapter. Chapter 4, has addressed the first contributory research question concerned with lesson content selection, Chapter 5 has reported the findings from the second one, scaffolding lessons with embedded intercultural components, and the third evidentiary chapter, Chapter 6 has described how activities for engaging students in Chinese language learning, can be embedded with intercultural knowledge.

Bringing the findings together, from across these three evidentiary chapters, will address the aim of this study which was to:

> report the findings of this research in terms of a framework (or a set of guidelines) for Chinese language teaching and learning which addressed:

- *content selection*, such as matching vocabulary and/or phrases to relevant topics,
- *scaffolding strategies*, such as how to question students skilfully to make the most of students' knowledge and challenge them to re-think and self-reflect,

and

- *activities design* where the beginning learners' interests, cognitive ability and the need to practice the target language have a cultural component embedded in them.

7.1.1 Content selection: Framework and guidelines

When selecting content for Chinese language learning, the findings from this research recommend the following as a framework and/or a set of guidelines.

For beginning teachers when designing Chinese language lessons that draw on cultural content:

- Pace the introduction of content which draws exclusively on *unique Chinese culture,* as young students may find this content very abstract and difficult to understand. When novice teachers are eager to share unique Chinese culture with the students, they may find the explanation of the cultural example takes longer than anticipated and this may result in the balance between language and culture in the lessons not being achieved.
- Choosing concrete comparable cultural content (Australian and Chinese cultures would both have these), such as colours, numbers and the topics close to students' daily lives (school life and special days in Australian culture), is recommended for novice teachers and for younger learners. When topics and content can be related to both cultures, intercultural communication and interaction is fostered. This type of content can provide opportunities for students to give their personal perspective or personal meaning-making during the lessons and more likely to be a successful means of engaging students with the target language and culture.
- Once the teacher gains more experience (and knows the students more comprehensively) or if a beginning teacher has a class of students who are in secondary school, the content incorporating abstract cultural elements (the *unique Chinese culture*) could be introduced.
- The content chosen must take account of the students' age, cognitive level

and connect to their previous language and cultural knowledge (of their own and the target language) in order that the *comparable cultural content* chosen is at an appropriate level.

- The content should be balanced between the language and culture.

The importance of selecting appropriate and meaningful content in terms of lesson success cannot be understated. The teacher-researcher's conclusion was that the teaching content for intercultural language learning should stimulate the learners' insight, provide opportunities for students to see the target culture through meaningful language in context and the discussions need to raise the intercultural awareness.

7.1.2 Scaffolding: Framework and guidelines

Scaffolding was shown in this research to be a successful technique to support students' Chinese language learning. The following are the recommendations.

7.1.2.1 Questioning to establish prior knowledge and experiences: Framework and guidelines

The findings outlined in Chapter 5 suggest that the teacher's role in formulating skillful and scaffolded questions could enable teachers to build on students' prior knowledge so new knowledge can be introduced step-by-step. The suggested framework has been re-stated in table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Scaffolding of questioning to elicit prior knowledge

Questioning techniques	Description	Purpose
Polar (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009)	'Yes' or 'no' answers to establish students' existing knowledge and experiences.	Students' positions within the context provided the teacher with the starting point onto which new knowledge can be built.
Referential (Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2014)	Requires students to offer information and opinions. Questions need to be structured to lead children's thinking.	Students are required to begin to *reflect* on the intercultural connections and *compare* this to their own.
Display (Zohrabi, Yaghoubi-Notash and Khiabani, 2014)	Questions that lead the children to practice the new Chinese language targets.	Students' memorization and recollection of the new language elements (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure) can be supported.

7.1.2.2 Links to strengthen associations to the new language

Several scaffolding techniques were implemented in this research to provide knowledge links (or hooks) for the students to connect with new content introduced in the Chinese language learning lessons. These were:

1. Connecting language learning with actions: It is recommended that when teaching new Chinese vocabulary, include an intercultural context and whenever possible some kind of physical action that can be associated with the word/phrases to be taught in Chinese. Scaffold the lesson to connect to prior knowledge and extend to a more abstract level.

2. Using trans-language sentence structures: It is recommended that when teaching new Chinese vocabulary, include an intercultural context and whenever practicable substitute Chinese words/phrases within an English sentence. Scaffold the lesson by starting with very easy sentence structures increase difficulty as students become more confident.

3. Visualization in Chinese character teaching: It is recommended that when teaching new Chinese characters, include an intercultural context and whenever practicable link the physical features of the Chinese characters to cultural stories and/or objects, living and natural, to support memorization of the characters. Scaffold the lesson by using simple Chinese characters initially and then increasing to more difficult examples.

7.1.3 Activities—Interactive and intercultural

When designing activities for Chinese language learning, the findings from this research recommend the following as a framework and/or a guideline.

7.1.3.1 Role-plays

Role-plays as opportunities for Chinese language learning with an intercultural context were explored in this research. It is recommended that when practicable, role-plays with *real-life scenarios* or those with a *Chinese cultural element* could be designed to engage students in intercultural language learning.

7.1.3.2 Games

Games as opportunities for Chinese language learning with an intercultural context were explored in this research. It is recommended that when practicable, games to practice *intercultural language speaking* and *intercultural language writing practice* be incorporated into lessons as this approach interests and can motivate students' attention and learning.

Some further guidelines for implementing games are:

- introduce famous celebrities (appeals to popular culture—Australian and Chinese,
- monitor students' responses—beware of boredom, in which case: change the game format by including more students as volunteers, allowing the students to take on the role of the teacher, and draw children's attention back to

explain the new rules,

- allow the students to make approximations—good attempts should be rewarded,
- plan time in the lesson for practice—games can go ‘overtime’ and the lesson goals may not be reached—monitor the time!

7.1.3.3 Story-telling

Story-telling as an interactive, intercultural classroom activity was explored in this research. It is recommended that *text-based story-telling* and *audio-visual story-telling* be incorporated into Chinese language learning lessons. Across both methods of story-telling it is recommended that teachers ensure a balance between the cultural context and the language elements.

Some further guidelines for implementing story-telling are:

- Consider the age of students and do not assume their cognitive abilities are beyond their years,
- Allow students to think in their own way, not as the teacher-researcher thinks,
- Use questioning to seek students opinions.

7.1.3.4 Arts-making for intercultural language learning

Arts-making as an interactive, intercultural classroom activity was explored in this research. It is recommended that *drawing* and *paper-cutting* be incorporated into Chinese language learning lessons. Children enjoy creative activities and this activity provides an informal way for teachers to observe and learn more about the students, including their perspectives and ability levels.

Some further guidelines for implementing arts-making are:

- Consider the age of students and do not assume their cognitive abilities are beyond their years,
- Adjust the pace of the lesson to ensure all students follow step-by-step

instructions (e.g. paper-cutting)

7.2 Limitations of this research

7.2.1 Research design

The research design approved for the conduct of this project included as the data collection method, the recording of the teacher-researcher's observations of the students' performance in the Chinese language learning classes as well her own reflections (step four in the Xingzhi/AR cycle). In hindsight the teacher-researcher has reflected that these two data collection sources have provided a subjective account when analysis of these data was undertaken. To overcome this limitation of the research design, including interviews with the classroom teachers and students as data sources may have provided a more objective account of the Chinese language lessons as they were taught. For example, the classroom teachers could have been interviewed for their perspectives about the teacher-researcher's approach to the selection of content, the implementation of the scaffolding strategies and the interactive, intercultural activities designed. Similarly, holding focus group discussions with the students might have provided another lens through which to view this research. The teacher-researcher would now contend that the students themselves would have been a very useful source of data to provide feedback on the teacher-researcher, her teaching and their intercultural thinking.

Due to the research design, a further limitation for this research was that the teacher-researcher did not construct a consistent record of the students' improvements or lack thereof in terms of their intercultural understanding or awareness.

Both of these limitations were unintentionally an outcome of this research. In both cases, the teacher-researcher, as a novice Chinese language teacher, used all the time available for each class (40-45 minutes once per week) to achieve the goals for the Chinese language lessons. Time was not factored into the lessons as part of the research project and hence, no feedback from the students was sought. Considering the age of the students (10-11 years), the teacher-researcher decided that probing these young minds for their thoughts and feelings through interviews may have been

challenging. This provided another reason for the initial decision, not to include student feedback as a viable data source.

7.2.2 The teacher-researcher's limited knowledge of language and culture in English and Chinese

The teacher-researcher began this research project as a novice bilingual teacher of Chinese using her L2, to native English-speaking students. Compared to more experienced teachers, who would be competent in balancing language and culture when implementing an intercultural approach to second language teaching, the teacher-researcher initially tended to design and teach the Chinese language lessons with either a stronger focus on language or culture, but not in a balanced way. Throughout the course of the eighteen months of this research project, this skill for the teacher-researcher improved. However, initially it contributed to a limitation in the conduct of this research. A final consideration for the teacher-researcher has been to acknowledge that as a non-native English speaker, and as the Chinese language lessons were taught in English, the lack of the ability to express abstract ideas or explanations was sometimes not clear for the students in Year 5/6. This had a negative impact on the lessons and hence the findings of this research.

7.2.3 Limited research literature relevant to the field

The rigor of this research could have been improved if the teacher-researcher was able to access more literature in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language (using English as the teaching medium), to native English-speaking young students who are beginning learners.

What was found to be more prevalent in the research literature were studies pertaining to teaching English as the second language, and intercultural language teaching from English to Japanese, or English to French. Studies that were identified in the field of Chinese language teaching in western countries using English as the method of instruction were reported as being conducted with college/university aged students.

The lack of specific research studies in this field, meant that the teacher-researcher was unable to source ideas to help with the research design, and in particular the data collection and analysis. The teacher-researcher recognized that a narrow interpretation of the data may have resulted with only 'part of the picture' being observed and reflected upon. A broader interpretation of the data could possibly have been supported if there had been more literature available.

7.2.4 'Time' as a limiting factor for consistent Chinese language learning

Another limiting factor in this research was the time allocation at the Gardens Public School devoted to Chinese language learning. The curriculum schedule for Chinese language learning was 40-45 minutes for each class, once per week. In terms of an optimum curriculum proportion of time, this proved to be inadequate to be able to observe improvement in performance and Chinese language learning across all classes.

7.3 Implications and recommendations for further research

The following recommendation is offered as a possibility for further research in the area of Chinese language teaching based on an intercultural approach with young beginning learners in an Australian educational context.

7.3.1 Research in multi-cultural classrooms

This research at the Gardens Public School was undertaken at a school with a high proportion of English-only speakers. It is proposed that the intercultural approach to Chinese language teaching could be implemented in classrooms at schools with high proportions of migrant and refugee students whose first language is other than English. The opportunities in these classrooms for cross-cultural understanding would be enhanced. It might be proposed that in multi-cultural classrooms, there would be opportunities for the language teacher to explore the essence of language and culture with students from many and varied cultural and language backgrounds.

7.4 Concluding comments by the teacher-researcher

Undertaking this research has provided the teacher-researcher with many unique opportunities for personal and professional growth and development.

7.4.1 Knowledge improvement/gain

The teacher-researcher's understanding of culture, language and their relationship has improved over the course of this study, research and teaching project. The relationship between language and culture is a key understanding in the teaching and learning of second languages. Through this research, the teacher-researcher has gained a deeper insight into these issues with the prospect of improved Chinese language teaching practice to follow.

7.4.2 Confronting stereotypes

The teacher-researcher arrived in Australia with some preconceived stereotypes about western culture and how young children might operate in society and in school. Some of these stereotypes were:

> "I thought people who lived in western societies valued freedom as very important. People were very free and maybe didn't care about rules. I thought the students would be able to do whatever they pleased and school life would be very casual. Actually the school I taught in, was very strict—the children were taught how to be polite and how to behave".

Another stereotype the teacher-researcher held was that the languages and cultures and therefore the people, from China and Australia were totally different. After this studying abroad experience, the teacher-researcher has challenged this stereotype in favour of recognizing that the level of the differences is superficial. "We share the same humanity! Although we are very different, we can still find something in common". The teacher-researcher's ability to understand others has improved.

7.4.3 Teaching

The teacher-researcher's professional learning, as a teacher of the Chinese language to primary school children, has taken on some marked improvements. In the initial stages, having previously taught university students, the teacher-researcher wanted to cover as much as possible in one lesson. Acknowledging the young students' cognitive level and their ability to absorb the knowledge were not factored clearly enough into the teaching plans. After observations of the students during lessons and critical self-reflection after the lessons, the teacher-researcher used this methodology, teacher Xingzhi/AR, to then propose new and improved lessons. Rethinking the Chinese language lessons—to implement the scaffolding approach—allowed the teacher-researcher to acknowledge the students' interests, background knowledge and cognitive level more precisely, in order to plan and teach more meaningful lessons. This resulted in the students becoming more confident and successful in their Chinese language learning.

7.4.4 Research

As a novice researcher and teacher of young children the learning curve for the teacher-researcher was very steep. The ROSETE program is inspiring and challenging, fast paced and intensive. In deciding on the research topic and question, the teacher-researcher initially chose the general topic of embedding an intercultural perspective into Chinese language teaching. The skills of narrowing the research focus to manage the data collection and analysis within the available time frame was a valuable personal and professional learning experience.

Studying and implementing the Xingzhi/AR methodology has also had a significant impact on the teacher-researcher. This methodology can be applied to work, study and also life in general. It involves 'learning by doing' and reflecting on the outcomes with the aim of improvement—oneself and the tasks at hand. This learning has not been only about research. It relates to and can be applied to all aspects of life. This knowledge will always be with the teacher-researcher. No one can take that away. Undertaking this entire study, research and teaching project has been like the training of a new mindset—new intellectual thoughts, to analyze and reflect, to find

the reasons for some phenomenon—to see things more deeply, not only part of the picture, but a broader and deeper perspective on phenomenon in work, study and life.

7.4.5 Future plans—identity as a teacher and researcher

The teacher-researcher, in conducting this research project, has become more self-aware in her identity as a Chinese language teacher. Although a very friendly and welcoming rapport was built up with the students and teachers at the Gardens Public School over the eighteen months of this project, teaching primary school children has its own set of challenges. The teacher-researcher has confirmed her identity as more suited to be a Chinese language teacher with adults in a college or university setting. At this level, there are more opportunities to engage critical thinking into content or course unit designs, including the development of a text around which deep discussions could arise. The teacher-researcher is now very interested in working with adults as they are able to provide a range of perspectives on how their culture/s see Chinese culture and language.

Now familiar with the research approach through Xingzhi/AR, the teacher-researcher would like to focus on teaching and research in intercultural Chinese language in any English speaking country around the world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Human Research Ethics Committee-Approval

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia
Office of Research Services

ORS Reference: H11308

University of Western Sydney

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

18 January 2016

Professor Michael Singh
School of Education

Dear Michael,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H11308 "An exploration of embedding intercultural knowledge to engage students in Chinese language teaching - a bilingual beginning teacher's action research", until 31 August 2016 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form: http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uws.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Michael Singh, Cheryl Ballantyne, Jinghe Han, Xiaoyan Wang

Yours sincerely

Professor Elizabeth Deane
Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee

Appendix Two: Participant Information Sheet (Parents and Caregivers)

School of Education
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone: 0414438659
Email:
18143195@student.uws.edu.au

Participant information sheet (Parent and Caregiver)

Project Title:
An exploration of embedding intercultural knowledge in Chinese language teaching - A bilingual beginning teacher's action research in a Sydney Public School

Who is carrying out the study?
The Chinese teacher Miss Xiaoyan Wang is carrying out this study.

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by Chinese teacher Miss Xiaoyan Wang and the research will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Hons) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Professor of Michael Singh, Dr. Jinghe Han and Ms Cheryl Ballantyne.

What is the study about?

This project is to exploring a way that how to design Chinese lessons through embedding intercultural knowledge to help students understand and learn Chinese language and culture through a teacher researcher's action research. This action research aims to fill intercultural knowledge into the lesson plan to make Chinese more learnable. By saying more learnable, it is about the classroom engagement and a better understanding of a new language and culture from another community. The students would be observed in Chinese class by the Chinese teacher. It includes their performance of learning, their thoughts on Chinese culture and language and their works (such as exercises, crafts) in the classroom.

What does the study involve?

Your child will be observed by the teacher researcher Miss Wang in the classroom, their performance including what they do and what they say would be recorded in her reflection journal as one of the data to be analyzed.

How much time will the study take?

The observation would be held each Tuesday in each term (3 terms in total) when the school is having Chinese in the classrooms.

All the materials will be stored in a locked cabinets at CRE (College of Education Research) for five years, after which they will be removed.

Accessed by the principal researcher Miss Xiaoyan Wang and her supervisors.

If you have concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your child within the period of storage. These recordings can be accessed in the following ways: contact Miss Xiaoyan Wang Tel: 0414438659, E-mail: 18143195@students.uws.edu.au)

Will the study benefit me?

This study may be of benefit for your child. It will enable the Chinese teacher Miss Xiaoyan Wang to have a better understanding of the students, including their existing Chinese knowledge, their interests and so on. Based on these, the teacher could improve her teaching that make the learning and teaching in a better way.

Will the study have any discomforts?

The study will not cause any discomfort for you or for your child. The participation is voluntary. If you do not want your child to participate in or your child does not want to participate, it will not affect the relationship between your child and the researcher and will not affect the researcher's Chinese teaching to your child. If your child changes his/her decision after the study has started, he/she can withdraw at any time he/she wants. Any information which has already been collected from your child will be deleted totally.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is voluntary work. No payment is involved.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

No one can identify your child from the results of this study. Only the researcher and her supervisors have access to the data collected from your child with ethical permission. Your child's questionnaires will be on paper, which will be kept in a locked cabinet for five years, after which will be destroyed. The result of this study might be disseminated through a master thesis, short and long SEARP reports and publications with joint name of the research and the supervisors.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?

Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to consent. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time or you may withdraw your child from the study at which point all written records of your child's participation will be destroyed. Once you child choose to withdraw from this study, she or he could sit on the other side of the classroom, not having Chinese lessons and thus not being observed by the Chinese teacher.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. But only the children in the class can participate.

What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Miss Xiaoyan Wang will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaoyan Wang (Tel: 0414438659, E-mail: 19143195@student.uws.edu.au) OR Prof. Michael Singh (Tel: 0404012409, E-mail: m.j. singh@uws.edu.au) OR Dr. Jinghe Han (Tel: 0422652972, E-mail: j.han@uws.edu.au)

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Appendix Three Participant Consent Form (Parents and Caregivers)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

University of Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

Participant consent form (Parents and Caregivers)

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Project Title: An exploration of embedding intercultural knowledge in Chinese language teaching - A bilingual beginning teacher's action research in a Sydney Public School

I,……, give consent for my child ……

to participate in the research project titled An exploration of embedding intercultural knowledge in Chinese language teaching - A bilingual beginning teacher's action research in a Sydney Public School.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project. We consent that my child could be observed in Chinese class by the Chinese teacher. The Chinese teacher could record the performance of my child's learning, thoughts on Chinese culture and language, and my child's works (such as exercises, crafts) in the classroom.

I understand that my child's involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity.

I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

I consent to let my child to participant in the observation conducted by Miss Xiaoyan in her Chinese class.

Signed (Parent/Caregiver): Signed (child):

Name: Name:

Date: Date:

Return Address: I 1.21 School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 2751

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix Four: State Education Research Application Process-Approval

Education
Public Schools

Miss Xiaoyan Wang
41 Anthony Crescent
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

DOC16/792198
SERAP 2015543

Dear Miss Wang

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *An exploration of embedding intercultural knowledge in Chinese language teaching - A bilingual beginning teacher's action research in a Sydney Public School*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 15-Aug-2017.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Xiaoyan Wang	WWC0499205E	13-Oct-2019

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Shantha Liyanage
R/Manager, Research
15 August 2016

School Policy and Information Management
NSW Department of Education
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix Five: The Chinese Story Script

Misfortune May be an Actual Blessing

"Once upon a time, there was an old man known as Sàiwēng, living at the north border of China. One day his favourite horse, which was loyal and strong, went across the border to the Mongolia and went missing. When the neighbors heard of it, all of them came to show sympathy for his missing horse. But to their surprise, Sàiwēng said calmly, "Well, sadness might not help. Let's just wait. See what would happen."

"A few months later, the missing horse came back with another strong horse from the north. This time everyone came to congratulate Sàiwēng, and said it was so lucky that he could get the horse back plus another good horse. But the old man was not that pleased, he didn't take it as a good sign. He just took the two horses back to yard in case they ran away again. Actually, Sàiwēng was very well off, and had lots of good horses in his farm. His son was fond of riding horses. One day the son tried to ride the new horse to see how good it was, but he fell from it and broke his leg because the new horse was still too wild to ride. People came to comfort Sàiwēng, and said it was so unlucky that the new horse hurt his son. But Sàiwēng said it was okay. He stated that perhaps it might be a blessing instead. No one believed him, and everyone was surprised by his comment. One year later, the Mongol soldiers from the north came across the border and started an invasion. All the young men from the nation were enlisted to fight against the invaders. Nearly nine out of ten of the young men died in this war. But Sàiwēng's son was not enlisted because he was crippled from the accident that happened the year before. In that way Sàiwēng's son survived the miserable war."